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of the century, Layamon's English adaptation (by far the earliest English form of any part of the Arthur cycle) from the end of the century. It would, however, be a mistake to assume that because the legend found an earlier home in historical rather than in imaginative literature, the romantic element is necessarily the younger of the two. It can, on the contrary, be proved that the romantic form must have been popular in part of France for at least half a century preceding the issue of Geoffrey's History. An Italian scholar, Signor Pio Rajna, has traced names [illegible] the Arthurian cycle, in [illegible] himself and of Gawai[illegible] from the first qu[illegible] some cases the [illegible] individual m[illegible]

Romance as an organised body of French literature is at least three-quarters of a century older than the oldest extant texts.

How did the Arthur legend reach Italy? This question involves consideration of the means by which it was spread through France and from thence throughout Europe. The Italians certainly derived their knowledge from the Normans, who established their sway over Southern Italy and Sicily in the second half of the eleventh century. Robert Guiscard and Roger of Sicily had song and letters which, no less than the Vikings had brought home. To minstrels hat knowledge of Signor Rajna's conquest of

the ducal families intermarried. William the Conqueror, as is well known, had no stauncher ally than the Duke of Brittany when he set forth to wrest from the Saxons the island home of the Bretons' ancestors. We are not compelled to content ourselves with surmises; we possess positive and trustworthy testimony to the early popularity of the Breton lays in Normandy. How early it is difficult to say. But oral transmission from Brittany to Normandy must have been at work at the latest in the first half of the eleventh century.

Some scholars have held that to this oral diffusion of the Arthur legend by Breton minstrels is wholly due its spread throughout France, and that the French romance-writers took from their Breton informants little more than a mass of names and a few skeleton plots, furnishing themselves the det[illegible]ident, the form and the animating [illegible] detect a written as well as an [illegible] the names in the [illegible]ay the fact of their [illegible]lso that this [illegible]be

so that although in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the difference between Welsh and Breton was far less than at the present day, still it was sufficiently marked to enable an expert to decide whether a particular twelfth-century word is Breton or Welsh. A couple of examples may be cited. In the common Welsh name now written Owen the o represents a sound formerly akin to mute ĕ, and the word, written Yuein, was pronounced something like Er-wen. Now in the French romances the word is written Yvains, and was pronounced Eevañ. The French scribe took the Welsh **y** (=ĕ) for his own y (=ee), the Welsh u (=w) for his own u (=v), and so turned ĕwen into eevan. Had he *heard* the sound he could never have written down Yvains. A similar piece of evidence is supplied by the name of the Welsh hero Caradoc. His standing epithet in Welsh literature is composed of two words written *breichhir*, long great arms: breich = *bras*, arm, a[illegible]

indisputable historical facts testifies to a double mode of transmission of the Arthurian legend throughout the French-speaking world — oral, through the medium of Breton minstrels; written, through the medium of Welsh texts. This second mode of transmission is not only later than the Norman conquest of England it is consequent upon it. Great and varied have been the issues of that event; most important from the standpoint of general European literature have been the rise of a sixth-century Roman-British chieftain to the type and model of Christian heroic achievement, the coalescence and flowering of a mass of Celtic fairy tales into one of those supreme legends in which mankind sums up and sets forth its ideal.

The Conquest, which left the Duke of Normandy vassal to the King of France whilst it gave him a position of equal power and influence, contained all the germs of the secular rivalry of the two countries, a rivalry which only began when England, ceasing for a time to be English, became far as literary and social ideas were concerned new race of kings must needs have its *Matière de Bretagne* to rival full as that was of the glo rulers of France. The A hand. It was welcome might welcome the old

the attics, of a yet earlier race than the one it had dispossessed, a race in connection with which it might seek other title-deeds than those of force. And as French rulers of England were among the foremost personalities of the twelfth century, the body of imaginative literature which they patronised was bound, on that score alone, to flourish and prosper.

It may be questioned though if the development would have been as rapid had the conquerors found the Arthur stories in the same form under which they were already familiar with them thanks to their Breton neighbours. Undoubtedly the fact that the stream of tradition ran deeper and purer in Britain than in Brittany, in especial the fact that it had retained a closer touch with historic reality, had much to do with the vast and sudden outburst of the legend. Whilst the Norman-French poet found an even richer mass of legendary incident than the Breton lays had familiarised him with, the scholar and historian found what he took to be authentic history. And from one point of view the [redacted] far superior in his eyes to the [redacted] We laugh nowadays at the [redacted] e Ages towards antiquity. [redacted] vilisation was, as we see, [redacted] But for this very reason [redacted] ity of their connection [redacted] ssible to us, and they

were keenly bent upon forging an unbroken chain knitting themselves to the mighty kings and barons of Rome and Greece. This tendency is especially marked in the twelfth century, an age of intellectual revival, of renewed curiosity concerning classical antiquity. Although the fiction of classical descent seems to have arisen first among the Franks and to have passed from them to the Celts, yet the latter elaborated it with far greater insistence, wove it far more solidly into the web of their national traditions. This tendency, whilst taking a different direction and resulting in an entirely different set of stories, is as strongly marked in Ireland as in Wales. In the latter there was at least some historical justification; the historical Arthur certainly represents the struggle of Romano-British civilisation against invasive Teutonic heathendom. Some connection there was, slight and fragmentary though it be, between the society championed by Arthur and that of Imperial Rome. Be this as it may, there can be little doubt but that the Brutus element in Geoffrey's History, the story of the Trojan and Roman descent of the British, which seems to us so tedious and so ridiculous, contributed very greatly to its popularity and influence, and that the purely romantic aspects of the legend derived from their association with this pseudo-history a status and weight they would otherwise have lacked.

These causes might be deemed sufficient to account for the sudden and overwhelming popularity of the Arthur cycle in twelfth-century Europe. Of that popularity there is no more decisive proof than the influence it exercised upon other bodies of imaginative literature. The later works of the Charlemagne cycle are in detail, tone and spirit often as "Arthurian" as any purely Breton romance. Huon and Ogier are Arthurian heroes who have strayed by accident to the Court of Charlemagne. It is this later stage of the Charlemagne cycle which influenced thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy and furnished the soil from which was to spring the romance of Berni and Ariosto. In Germany, too, we find in the late twelfth and in the thirteenth century a number of works which belong to the old German heroic cycles, but betray in incident, form and spirit the influence of the "courtly," in other words, of the French Arthurian romance.

Causes, however, existed of a deeper, more permanent nature to which must be ascribed the effective sway of the Arthurian romance in twelfth-century Europe. Neither the patronage of the new lords of England, those new and ambitious competitors for the first place in the Western European world, nor the appeal to the antiquity-revering instincts of the age, would have sufficed. What were those deeper causes?

The Charlemagne cycle in its earlier form was, as already said, specially concerned with the strife of Christianity and Mohammedanism, with the struggle of vassal and overlord. Under neither of these aspects can its appeal to many minds during the twelfth century have been much weakened. But when the Charlemagne cycle first assumed literary form Christendom was standing upon the defensive; in the period of the Crusades it boldly took the offensive. This fact brought about a marked difference of feeling both as regarded the relations of the Christian to the Mohammedan world, and as regarded the ideal of warriorhood. One outcome of the Crusades, an unexpected and unwelcome one we may be sure to their promoters, was an increase of mutual toleration, regard, and admiration. The complex attitude of mind which resulted herefrom could no longer be satisfied by the simple, straightforward enmity against the Saracens we find in the *Chanson de Roland* and kindred works. Again, the incidents of the Crusading wars, largely fought as they were outside the purely feudal framework in which the earlier works of the *Matière de France* are set, tended to produce a different conception of knightly requirement and virtue. The call to the Crusade was addressed to the individual conscience of every Christian man, and although the machinery by which Christendom organised itself was largely

feudal, still far more scope was allowed for individual effort and initiative. The circumstances of the Crusades must in any case have brought to the front the type of the knight-errant, of the warrior to whom fighting and adventure are an end unto themselves, and are not dictated by considerations of feudal obedience and statecraft. Roland, falling alone in his glorious self-sacrifice, must always have represented at its highest one side of knightly endeavour; but knighthood had wandered into other worlds which the Roland ideal could no longer wholly fill. Another outcome of the contact between the younger West and the older, wiser East was an intensified appreciation of the world of mystery and magic. Here again the simpler tales which had charmed the men of the eleventh century failed to sustain their appeal.

I have left to the last the most potent and subtle of the causes which forcedly called a new literature into existence. To put it briefly, the patronage of literature was abruptly shifted from the one sex to the other. The poet no longer sang solely for men, but mainly for women. In the early part of the century changes in feudal custom granted to women the rights and privileges of feudal inheritance, and thereby made the heiress a factor of first-rate importance in the social and political life of the times. The student of twelfth-century England needs only to recall the *rôle* of

Matilda and of Eleanor of Aquitaine. The material and moral enhancement in the status of the great heiresses reacted upon that of all women of the aristocratic class. Throughout the century we find women among the most powerful and influential patrons of certain kinds of literature; we find them, too, actively promoting an attempt to reorganise social life and social morality in accordance with the ideals set forth in the literature they favoured. Here again the Crusades were a contributory cause. When the husband was away, it might be for years, fighting the Paynim, power and influence fell to the stay-at-home wife; nor, human nature being what it is, can it be subject for astonishment that prolonged absence led frequently to mutual infidelity, the very circumstances of which would tend to heighten and diversify the emotions of love and the modes through which they are manifested. For the husband's lady-love would often be a daughter of that older, mysterious civilisation with which he was brought into contact, a civilisation which had systematised love between the sexes into an inextricable blend of animalism, legal pedantry, and mysticism; whilst the wife's lover might be a cleric, with whom love had the attraction of the forbidden, or a minstrel, or one of the pages or knights of her household, her inferior, therefore, in station, wealth, or knowledge of life.

Thus a new literature was inevitable, and, equally inevitably, it had to possess certain characteristics. It had to be distinct from the *Matière de France;* it had to recognise the change in the circumstances of Christendom and to cease harping upon feelings that were partly outworn; it had to take into account the new ideal of adventurous knighthood; it had to give full prominence to the elements of mystery and sorcery; above all, it had to please women and to give expression to a new conception of the relations between the sexes.

These requirements were fulfilled by the French Arthurian romance, fulfilled, as I hope to make clear, because the older Celtic legends out of which that romance grew contained in germ all the elements which the twelfth century demanded and which it could have found nowhere else. The Celtic genius was reincarnated in twelfth-century France because the times were favourable; it took the world by storm because it contained incidents, personages, traits of feeling and character which were susceptible of embodying the most perfect form of the twelfth-century ideal.

I pass on to the consideration of the older Celtic world, in which I seek the origin of the Arthur legend. Just as the historic conditions which determined the nature of the twelfth-century literature have been briefly sketched, so the historic

conditions under which early Celtic literature came into being must be considered.

Two great Celtic communities confront us in historic times—that of the Brythons, represented by the modern Welsh and Bretons; that of the Goidels, represented by the Gael of modern Ireland and Scotland. I shall, for convenience' sake, style them Welsh and Irish. They differ in important respects. The Welsh came under Roman influence, in pre-Christian days, some two to three centuries before it sensibly affected Ireland. Again, the Welsh had to fight for their national existence, and thus acquired a partial cohesion, a racial unity lacking among the Irish.

Great as are the differences due to these causes, they do but serve to emphasise the essential kinship between the two communities. In both, social organisation is still in that tribal stage out of which the Greek and Roman kinsmen of Welsh and Irish had passed centuries before, and had, when they came into contact with Celtdom, utterly forgotten. In both, legal theory and practice have but slightly progressed beyond the stage of universal private warfare—atonement for wrong-doing is made by compensation to the private sufferer, and not by State-exacted punishment. In both, the obligations of blood revenge are paramount, but the injurious effects of the practice are mitigated by strict rules. Both have an elaborate

classification into ranks, a precise scale for estimating the worth and station of every individual. Both have but recently emerged from a theocratic stage, if the word be applicable to a state in which the soothsayer and spellwright equals the war-chief in authority and influence.

We gather our knowledge of the social and political organisation of the two Celtic communities mainly from their extant bodies of law. Our wonder at the archaic character of these legislations is increased when we learn that the laws were codified centuries after both communities had fully accepted Christianity and its accompanying classic culture. The tradition that the Irish codes are largely due to Patrick is in so far true as they are certainly the work of Christian clerics in conjunction with the *brehons*, or native legal class; whilst of the tenth-century Welsh Code of Howel the Good we know that it was actually submitted to and sanctioned by Rome.

Finally, we may note that, from the dawn of our knowledge concerning them down to the eleventh century, the two Celtic communities were in constant communication with each other, and that the communication was of a nature to affect the intellectual and moral activities of both peoples; moreover, that, except in so far as the Welsh struggle against the German invaders of Britain is concerned, they were both cut off from

political contact with the remainder of the European world except, to a slight degree, with the Breton kinsmen of the Welsh.

What kind of literature might we look for among these two communities? In the first place, we should expect to find it essentially similar, considering the essential similarity of their social, legal, and institutional standpoint. The nature of the literature would be determined by the historic conditions. The Celts had retained their archaic, pre-Roman social organisation with the utmost tenacity; they might be expected to retain archaic beliefs and imaginings with equal tenacity. They were still in the tribal stage; their literature might be expected to reflect the pretensions of the tribe, to inflame its ardour against rival tribesmen. They had but recently emerged from the theocratic stage; we should expect to find the tribal wizard, call him Druid or Bard, a most important character, and all that relates to his dealings with the unseen insisted upon. The duty of blood-revenge was paramount; we should expect a mass of narrative involving family and clan feuds.

The differences pointed out between the historic development of Welsh and Irish might also be expected to leave their mark upon the literature. The Irish came later under the influence of Roman culture; they are likely, therefore, to

have preserved a more archaic presentment of Celtic antiquity. The Welsh had, and the Irish had not, a foreign foe to contend against; the sagas of the former are likely to be more epic in tone, and to divert to the racial enemy that ardour of combat which otherwise had spent itself upon a rival tribesman. In Ireland, on the contrary, where the country was split up among a number of clans, equal in pride of birth and pretension, divided by no real issues, but clashing continually against each other in border raids, we should expect to find the heroic type embodied less in the national champion against the foreign invader than in the glorified freebooter and tribal brave. Again, whilst the literature of both communities might be expected to betray few traces of the militant Christian feeling so characteristic of the *Chanson de Roland* and other works of the *Matière de France*, this would be less marked in Welsh than in Irish literature. For the German foes of Wales were heathens at first, and when they did accept Christianity the circumstances were such as to increase rather than diminish the hatred of the Welsh.

I have sketched hypothetically two literatures in outline, emphasising their points of kinship and dissimilarity. Did these literatures really exist, it may be asked, and can we be sure they are older than the French Arthurian romance of the twelfth

century? So far as Ireland is concerned, these questions must be answered unhesitatingly in the affirmative; as far as Wales is concerned, more doubtfully and cautiously. There exists a mass of Irish romantic literature which if printed would fill some two to three thousand octavo pages, known to be older than the eleventh century and traceable back in many cases with reasonable certitude to the eighth or even seventh century. These dates refer to the substance of the stories, not to their actual wording: this can seldom be carried back beyond the eleventh century, and for this reason. Ireland was ravaged in the ninth and part of the tenth century by the terrible Viking invasions. During this period a vast number of clerical and bardic foundations were destroyed, learned communities were scattered, MSS. were burnt, torn, or thrown into the water. During the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries Ireland had developed a marvellous intellectual activity, the signs and tokens of which are still found all over Western Europe. To this vigorous and promising growth of intellectual and artistic life, parallel with the outburst of song and study which characterised Anglo-Saxon England during a portion of the same period, the Viking invasions put a rude stop. But their purely destructive phase passed away after a time. The Norsemen were absorbed into the tissue of Irish society,

enriching and strengthening it. Then came a revival of Irish story-telling, a revival of Irish learning. The old MSS. were hunted up, their torn and scattered fragments were transcribed in the language of the day, great collections of legend—historic, heroic, mythical, Christian-legendary—were formed, the traditional annals of the race were noted and systematised, and the result was consigned to great vellum MSS., the oldest existing of which is the Book of the Dun Cow, copied at the end of the eleventh century from older MSS. which have perished.

So far the Irish evidence. We cannot be so sure as regards Wales. Her MSS. are later, the oldest (the Black Book of Caermarthen) dating from the third quarter of the twelfth century. Nor do these MSS. betray plainly, as do the Irish ones, the fact that they are transcripts from older ones. Again, the practice of literary forgery was rife in mediæval Wales, and it is difficult at times to discriminate between the archaic and the pseudo-archaic. Nevertheless we do possess a certain amount of poetry which may be assigned to the seventh and eighth centuries, one poem, the Gododin, possibly to the end of the sixth century, and a small but precious series of legendary prose tales, the Mabinogion, which must antedate the twelfth century.

A very large proportion of this literature,

whether Irish or Welsh, consists of imaginative fiction, the themes of which are derived from the mythic and heroic traditions of the race. In characterising this fiction the word that rises involuntarily to the lips is the word "romantic." The most casual observer cannot but notice that there is a kinship of tone and spirit between this literature and the French Arthurian stories from which we derive our idea of the "romantic." To further characterise Celtic legendary fiction, let me record the requirements found necessary in the new literature of the twelfth century. That had, we saw, to exemplify the ideal of adventurous knighthood. This ideal is necessarily prominent in Irish legend, which is concerned not with great racial wars but with the achievements, often single-handed, of the adventurous champion. Again, we noted that the twelfth century demanded a fresh and more imaginative presentment of the world of sorcery and magic than earlier French literature could yield. But this element is especially marked in Irish story-telling, the expression of a race which had but recently passed out of the theocratic stage, which assigned the utmost prominence to the Druid and his arts. The twelfth century was tired in part of the struggle between Christian and heathen, and the Celtic tales have their being in a world remote from and untouched by Christianity. The twelfth century was eager for a woman's

literature, for a new expression of the passion of love. But Irish fiction is peculiarly rich in love stories, and Irish legend has preserved a type of womanhood, independent, capricious, mistress of herself and her fancies, singularly akin, if the changed conditions of society be considered, to the great and noble ladies who ruled over Courts of Love, and held the bestowal of their favour the highest guerdon of knightly effort.

Here let me pause. I have shown that the development of Western Christendom during the late eleventh and the twelfth century inevitably threw older literature—in this case the *Matière de France*—into disrepute, and created the demand for a new literature. I have shown that one of the most important events of this period, the Norman-French Conquest of England, forced to the front a body of heroic fiction, the legend of Arthur and his knights, and gave it the advantage of powerful and fashionable patronage. I have shown that the Celtic-speaking peoples of these islands possessed a rich literature, which was bound, owing to the historic conditions of its production, to exhibit certain characteristics—characteristics largely similar to those which a different set of historical conditions tended to produce in twelfth-century literature.

The following up of these clues, the detailed examination of the lines of investigation here sug-

gested, must be left to other studies, which I hope to issue in this series—to studies of the Irish cycles of Cuchulinn, and of Finn and Ossian; of the West Mabinogion; of the Arthur and Grail legends; of the Celtic Elysium; as also of the great Continental cycles of romance. It is sufficient at present to show that the emergence of the Arthurian romance in the twelfth century is due to no arbitrary chance, but is the inevitable outcome of a long sequence of historic changes which had their centre and their culmination in these islands of Britain and Ireland.

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## CHRONOLOGICAL APPENDIX

*Sixth to Eighth Century.*

Building up of Irish heroic and romantic cycles in substantially the form in which they have come down to us fragmentarily.

Building up of British heroic cycle of Arthur and his Knights. The historic Arthur died in first third of sixth century; heroic poems commemorating the struggle of Britons and German invaders were probably in existence at end of sixth or in first half of seventh century. Nennius' *History of the Britons*, in which the Arthur legend is already developed, both on the heroic and the romantic side, dates from end of eighth century.

*Ninth to Eleventh Century.*

Building up of the Charlemagne cycle, or *Matière de France*, culminating in the *Chanson de Roland*, of which

the oldest form dates back to first half of eleventh century.

*Early Tenth Century.*

Settlement of Normandy and initiation of relation between the Duchies of Normandy and Brittany, which brought the Arthur stories to the knowledge of the Normans not later than the first half of the eleventh century.

*Second Third of Eleventh Century.*

Norman settlements in Sicily and South Italy. Spread of Arthur legend to Italy not later than last quarter of eleventh century.

*Second Half of Eleventh Century.*

Norman conquest of England, in which Bretons take prominent part. Norman contact, partly friendly, partly hostile, with Celtic-speaking population (*a*) in South Wales, (*b*) in Strathclyde, which still retained a Cymric-speaking population.

*From Second Half of Tenth Century to Middle of Twelfth Century.*

Considerable literary activity in Ireland. Irish sagas committed to MSS. which have come down to us either in their original form or in copies.

*Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries.*

Considerable literary activity in Wales. Gruffyd ap Conan returns to North Wales in 1073 after stay in Ireland and holds *eisteddfodau* during his long reign, which lasted till 1137. Rhys ap Tewdur returns in 1077 to South Wales from Brittany, and may have been instrumental in uniting the two strands of Welsh and Breton

romance. The *Mabinogion*, properly so-called, probably redacted in the last quarter of the eleventh century. Earlier poems, ascribed to celebrated sixth-century bards, are interpolated, added to and pastiched throughout the twelfth century. The stories of Kilhwch and Olwen, and the Dream of Rhonabwy, the only surviving Welsh Arthurian romances which antedate French influence, belong probably, in the form under which they have come down to us, to the middle of the twelfth century.

*Twelfth Century.*

1136. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, first draft.

About 1145. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Life of Merlin.*

1155. Wace's French translation of Geoffrey's *History.*

About 1150–1165. Marie de France. *Lais.*

About 1150. Beroul's *Tristan.*

About 1170. Thomas' *Tristan*, professedly based on the poem of the Breton Bréri.

1150–1188. Chrestien de Troies: *Tristan* (lost) about 1160, followed by *Erec*, *Cliges*, the *Chevalier à la Charrette* (about 1170), *Yvain*, and finally the *Conte du Graal*, written 1187–88, and left unfinished by the author.

With regard to the prose Arthurian romances, it is difficult to say anything more definite than that they go back substantially to the last twenty years of the twelfth century, but were continually being interpolated, added to, and reworked over until the middle of the thirteenth century, by which date they assumed the form under which they have come down to us.

*First Quarter of Thirteenth Century.*

Spread of the specific French Arthurian romances into Wales, giving rise to (*a*) new Welsh versions partly adapted from the French, (*b*) close and faithful Welsh translations representing earlier stages of the French romances than any existing MSS. of the latter.

# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

*** *The following notes aim at practical usefulness, not at bibliographical completeness. I have therefore, when I could, quoted popular and accessible works. I have added prices even where the books are out of print, although in such cases only approximate figures can be given.*

PAGES 2–3. *The Charlemagne Cycle.*

The best popular account in English is still that in Mr. Ludlow's *Popular Epics of the Middle Ages*, Macmillan, 1865, unfortunately out of print. Those who can read French and have access to a large library may be referred to L. Gautier's *Les épopées françaises*, 4 vols., 1879–1891, £4. General bibliographical information will be found in M. Gaston Paris' *La littérature française au Moyen Age*, 1890, 2*s.* 6*d.*, and M. G. Lanson's *Histoire de la littérature française*, 1898, 4*s.* 6*d.* A summary of the *Chanson de Roland* is provided by Messrs. Way and Spencer, 1*s.*

PAGE 3. *The Matière de Rome.*

An excellent idea of the way in which classic antiquity was conceived of in the Middle Ages may be got from Mr. Steele's *The Story of Alexander*, 1894, 7*s.* 6*d.* *Cf.* also M. G. Paris' *Littérature*, ch. ii.

*The Matière de Bretagne or Arthur Cycle.*

There exists no general account of this body of literature, which is perhaps as well, as any one wishing to make himself acquainted with it must go to the texts themselves. In the second half of the fifteenth century an

abridged translation of the majority of then existing French romances was made by SIR THOMAS MALORY in the well-known work entitled the *Morte d'Arthur*. The student may read it in Mr. Rhys' modernised abridgment (2 vols., Scott, 3*s*.), in Sir E. Strachey's slightly modernised and abridged Globe edition, 3*s*. 6*d*., or, best of all, in Dr. Sommer's facsimile edition, 7*s*. 6*d*. An adequate idea of the Arthurian romance in its strength and weakness may be obtained from this fine work, a fountain-head of English prose.

Of the French prose romances themselves, Malory's originals, the following have been printed: the ordinary MERLIN (edited by Dr. Sommer, 1894, £1 16*s*.); the so-called HUTH MERLIN (edited by G. Paris and J. Ulrich, 2 vols. 1890–91, £1); the GRAND ST. GRAAL (edited by Furnivall, 2 vols. 1861–63, about £2 2*s*.; edited by Hucher, 3 vols. 1875–79, about £1 10*s*.); the QUESTE DU ST. GRAAL (edited by Furnivall, 1864, about £1 5*s*.). An abridged modern French re-telling of the chief prose romances has been provided by M. Paulin Paris, *Romans de la Table Ronde*, 5 vols. 1868–77, £1 10*s*.

Of the romances unrepresented or only partially represented in Malory, the best known are SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT (abridged and modernised by Miss Weston, 1898, 2*s*.), and TRISTAN AND ISEULT (abridged and modernised by Miss Weston, 1899, 4*s*.).

For the earlier metrical romances, see p. 32.

The introductory chapters of Mr. Maccallum's *Idylls of the King and Arthurian Story*, 1894, 7*s*. 6*d*., give a good account of the historic and philological questions involved. Branches of the Cycle have been treated monographically: the GRAIL LEGEND by myself, *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, 1887, now out of print; the MERLIN LEGEND, in German, by Albert Schulz, *Merlin*, 1852, about 12*s*. 6*d*., in English, by Dr. Mead, 1898, 15*s*.; the GAWAIN LEGEND, by Miss Weston, 1897, 4*s*. The

articles on the subject in *Chambers's Encyclopædia* are good, those in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* are worthless.

PAGE 4. *Huon of Bordeaux.*

The French romance was admirably Englished by Lord Berners at the beginning of the sixteenth century. A beautiful modern French rendering by M. Gaston Paris has just been issued, 1898, 12*s.* 6*d.*

*Ogier the Dane* (*Holger Danske*).

The story of Ogier and his stay in the realm of the fairy queen, by whom he is beloved, is not, in spite of the hero's name, a Teutonic story, but a Celtic one, which has got attached to the Charlemagne Cycle probably in consequence of the popularity of this theme in the Arthur romance.

PAGE 6. *Chrestien de Troies.*

Two of Chrestien's Arthurian poems have been edited by Professor Förster: *Yvain*, 1891, 4*s.* (German adaptation by Hartmann von Aue, *Ywein*, edited by Bech, 1888, 7*s.*); *Erec*, 1894, 6*s.* (German adaptation by Hartmann, *Erec*, in Bech's edition). His *Chevalier à la Charrette* (Lancelot's rescue of Guinevere from Meleaguant) has been printed by Jonckbloet in his edition of the Dutch Lancelot, 2 vols. 4to, 1850, about 25*s.* His longest and most important work, left unfinished at his death in the last twenty years of the twelfth century, the *Conte du Graal*, is only extant in Potvin's excessively rare edition in 6 vols., Mons, 1866–71, worth about £6 6*s.* Professor W. W. Newell's *King Arthur and the Table Round*, 2 vols., Boston, 1897, comprises retellings from Erec, Yvain and the Conte du Graal.

*Marie de France.*

The best text of Marie's *lais* is Warnke's, 1885, 10*s.*, with storiological notes by Reinh. Köhler (these are unfortu-

nately weak as regards the Celtic parallels). Roquefort's edition of the works, 2 vols. 8vo, 1820, about 18*s.*, is useful because it has a modern French version.

*Geoffrey of Monmouth.*

Giles' translation in Bohn's series is adequate. The best existing text is that edited with valuable commentary by A. Schulz, 1854, about 15*s.* Professor Lewis-Jones is preparing a new edition for the Cymmrodorion Society. Wace's French version has been edited by Leroux de Lincy, 2 vols. 1836–38, about £1. Layamon's English version by Sir Fred. Madden, 3 vols., 1847, £1 10*s.*

PAGE 9. *Celtic Immigration into Brittany.*

The present Celtic-speaking Bretons derive their language almost certainly from the British immigrants of the fifth and sixth centuries, and *not* from the ancient Gaulish population. The best work on the immigration is M. J. Loth's *L'Émigration bretonne en Armorique*, 1883.

PAGE 10. *Welsh Originals.*

For a fuller development of the argument *see* M. J. Loth's article in the *Revue Celtique*, vol. xiv. (1892), pp. 475–503.

PAGE 11. *Norman Conquest.*

For all questions connected with the Conquest, the late Professor Freeman's great work (6 vols., partly out of print) should be consulted.

PAGE 13. *Trojan Origin of the Britons.*

The most accessible study for the English reader of this curious pseudo-historical fiction which the barbarian

nations of North-Western and Northern Europe modelled upon the lines of the Trojan origin of Rome, familiar to them from Virgil, will be found in Rydberg's *Teutonic Mythology*, pp. 22–64, 1891, 10*s*. 6*d*. Readers of German may be referred to Professor H. Zimmer's erudite and brilliant work, *Nennius vindicatus*, 1893, 12*s*. (pp. 232 *et seq*.).

PAGE 14. *"Courtly" Influence upon German Legend.*

The *Nibelungenlied* itself, although purely Teutonic as far as incidents and personages are concerned, has not escaped the influence of the French romances upon the material life depicted as well as upon the sentiments of some of the personages. Later works, such as *Dietleib*, *Biterolf*, the *Wolfdietrich* tales, and portions of the *Thidrekssaga* (into which Arthur of Britain is introduced), show this influence markedly. The English reader may consult Mr. Ludlow's *Popular Romances of the Middle Ages* (already mentioned, *supra*, p. 30), the German reader Edzardi's edition of the Thidrek and Volsungsa Sagas (3 vols. 1872–80, 10*s*. 6*d*.) or F. v. d. Hagen's edition of the *Heldenbuch* (Biterolf, the Rosengarten, the Wolfdietrich poems, &c.), 2 vols. 1855, about £1 1*s*.

PAGES 16 and 17. *Social and Political History of the Twelfth Century.*

As far as England is concerned, full information will be found in Miss Norgate's excellent *England under the Angevin Kings*, 2 vols., 1887, £1 12*s*. *Cf*. also, for the social and moral ideals of the time, Miss Farnell's *Lives of the Troubadours*, 1896, 6*s*. Among the great patronesses of literature in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries perhaps the most famous was Marie de Champagne, daughter of Louis VII. of France, the protectress of Chrestien de Troies. M. Gaston Paris has argued that

Chrestien wrote at her instigation the *Chevalier à la Charrette* (the story of Lancelot's love for Guinevere) to exemplify the ideal of courtly love first elaborated in Southern France.

PAGES 19, 20. *Welsh and Irish History.*

There is no good general work in English on the legal and social institutions of the Celts. As far as Wales is concerned, the best book is F. Walter's *Das alte Wales*, 1859, about 10*s.* 6*d.*; as far as Ireland is concerned the following volumes of Monsieur d'Arbois de Jubainville's *Cours de Littérature celtique*: vol. i., *Introduction à l'étude de la Littérature celtique*, 1883; vol. vi., *La Civilisation des Celtes et celle de l'épopée homérique*, 1899, 6*s.* 9*d.*; vols. vii. viii., *Etudes sur le Droit celtique*, 1894–95, 13*s.* 6*d.* Mr. Ginnell's *Brehon Laws* (1894, 6*s.*) and Hubert Lewis' *Ancient Laws of Wales*, 1890, 12*s.* 6*d.*, are useful as collections of material but unsafe guides for the general reader.

Professor Rhys' *Celtic Britain* (3*s.*) is a brilliant and suggestive discussion of the ethnological and prehistoric problems connected with the Celtic settlements in these isles.

PAGES 21, 22. *Irish and Welsh Literature.*

Dr. Douglas Hyde's *A Literary History of Ireland from Earliest Times to the Present Day*, 1899, 16*s.*, is a masterly introduction to the subject. A fair idea of the earliest Irish heroic legends may be obtained from Miss E. Hull's *Cuchullin Saga*, 1898, 7*s.* 6*d.*, and of mediæval Irish literature generally from Mr. St. Hayes O'Grady's *Silva Gadelica* (containing some forty texts, mostly of a legendary character), 1893, £2 2*s.* Dr. Joyce's *Old Celtic Romances*, 1894, 3*s.* 6*d.*, is a pleasing collection, but the tone is much modernised.

Stephens' *Literature of the Kymry*, 1876, about 15*s.*, is a

sound but uninspiring account of early Welsh literature. Luckily the masterpiece of Welsh mediæval prose, the so-called *Mabinogion*, a collection of mythic and romantic tales partly drawn from the ancient mythology which the Welsh shared with the Irish, partly from the legendary history of Britain, partly from the Arthurian romance as modified by the French poets, is accessible to the English reader in Lady Charlotte Guest's magnificent rendering, 1877, 18*s*.

Matthew Arnold's *Lectures on the Study of Celtic Literature*, 2*s*. 6*d*., delivered in 1867, are admirable in critical insight and sympathy, though out of date as regards the positive information given. But with this *caveat* no better introduction to the study of Celtic antiquity can be recommended.

PAGE 24. *The Book of the Dun Cow.*

The Leabhar na h-Uidhri, copied by a scribe slain in 1104 from earlier MSS. (most probably, as conjectured by Professor Zimmer, those brought together and edited by Flann of Monasterboice, who died in 1056, and was considered the leading scholar of his age), only survives in fragments, a facsimile edition of which has been issued by the Royal Irish Academy.

*The Black Book of Carmarthen* has been facsimiled by Mr. Gwenogfryn Evans, Oxford, 1896.

The *Gododin* of Aneurin, edited by Th. Stephens, has been issued by the Hon. Soc. of Cymmrodorion, 15*s*.

PAGES 25–27.

For the elaboration of the argument contained in these pages, see the final chapter of my *Studies on the Legends of the Holy Grail.*

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# FOLK-LORE:

## WHAT IS IT? AND WHAT IS THE GOOD OF IT?

I ONE day met a friend from a neighbouring town, who as soon as he greeted me inquired whether I had been over to a concert recently given there, about which he was enthusiastic. I was obliged to admit that I had not been, and to excuse myself I floundered into the still more humiliating confession: "You see, I know very little of music." He looked at me with a solemn pity in his eyes, and said: "Ah, yes! it is folklore you are interested in."

Well, I am interested in folklore; there is no denying it; and I am glad to have an opportunity of telling you why I am interested in it. I hope that when I have done so you will think there is at least no occasion for pitying me.

First, let me try to tell you what folklore is. Euclid, we know upon the unimpeachable authority of Lord Dundreary, is "all about letting A, B, and C be a triangle—as if I cared what they were." In the same way, perhaps, many of you

may be disposed to think that folk-lore is all about fairy tales, cures for warts, and so forth—things that no intelligent person would concern himself with. And indeed it must be admitted that, just as one branch of the science of mathematics, usually associated with the great name of Euclid, does teach (among other things) the properties of triangles, so folklore does investigate (among other things) the meaning of fairy tales and of cures for warts. But these are only a small part of folklore, as folklore itself is but a part—though, as I venture to think, a very important part—of the larger science of Anthropology—the Science of Man. The portion of Anthropology with which folklore deals is the mental and spiritual side of humanity. It is now well established that the most civilised races have all fought their way slowly upwards from a condition of savagery. Now, savages can neither read nor write ; yet they manage to collect and store up a considerable amount of knowledge of a certain kind, and to hand on from one generation to another a definite social organisation and certain invariable rules of procedure in all the events of life. The knowledge, organisation, and rules thus gathered and formulated are preserved in the memory, and communicated by word of mouth and by actions of various kinds. To this mode of preservation and communication, as well as to the things thus preserved

and communicated, the name of Tradition is given; and Folklore is the science of Tradition.

But here you will tell me: It is impossible to have a science of anything which does not fall into method, and is not capable of being classified and reduced to rule. Tradition is admittedly shifting, uncertain, chaotic; and how can you have a science of Tradition? It is a contradiction in terms.

So, indeed, it seems to be; but wait a bit. There is a confusion of thought in the objection. If by Tradition you mean the report of an alleged event not recorded in any contemporaneous writing, but handed down by word of mouth only, then I confess—Tradition is shifting and uncertain.

But even then it obeys *some* laws. Two Gloucestershire legends will illustrate what I mean. The first is recorded by Rudder, who, speaking of Chosen Hill, says: "There is a silly tradition in this part of the country that the church was begun to be built on a more convenient and accessible spot of ground, but that the materials used in the day were constantly taken away at night, and carried to the top of the hill, which was considered as a supernatural intimation that the church should be built there."* Now, this is a local variant of a very common story, accounting for the sites of churches up and down the country. In every

* *A New History of Gloucestershire* (1779), p. 33. *Chosen* is apparently a corruption of *Churchdown*.

case, of course, the story has arisen long subsequent to the erection of the church, for it professes to account for a situation which is, for some reason, inconvenient or absurd according to the circumstances of the period when the story arose. When the real reason for a given fact is unknown or forgotten, in certain stages of culture a story arises (this is the law) attributing to it a supernatural origin. A church is naturally exposed in a special manner to supernatural interference. Hence it is only what we may expect if we find supernatural interference invoked as the reason for the site of a church. The fact forgotten here is that the original village was on the top of the hill. The hilltop was in fact a settlement from very early times, and was fortified by a rampart and ditch, of which the remains are still to be seen. A church must have stood here for many hundred years, since the existing building contains stones carved with what is called Anglo-Saxon work, which have been built into the present fabric in places other than those for which they were designed. The hilltop was, however, practically abandoned during the Middle Ages, for so early as the twelfth century Roger, Archbishop of York, to whose see Churchdown belonged, laid pipes from the well near the top to supply the present village with water, and one of the early miracles credited to Thomas à Becket was performed there during the

operation.* Hence there has been plenty of time for a tradition like that I have mentioned to grow up.

The laws affecting tradition as a record of historical events have as yet hardly been investigated with scientific accuracy. Theories there have been without number; but these have been, for the most part, little more than guesses. Still, I think I may venture to lay down another law, namely, that when a fact of ancient date is remembered, the memory of it is not a bare transcript of the event, but is transfigured into some imaginative form, and in some circumstances that transfiguration takes a supernatural shape. Let me illustrate this by the legend of Bisley Church: another instance of the same story of the removal by night of the stones, here definitely said to have been accomplished by the devil. Now, the place pointed out as the intended site of the church is the site of a Roman villa; and when the church was restored, some years ago, portions of the materials of that villa, including an altar of the Penates, were found embedded in the walls.† The fact remembered was

* *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Soc.* vol. i. p. 167; Abbott, *St. Thomas of Canterbury*, vol. ii. p. 220, quoting in parallel columns the accounts of Benedict (*Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, Rolls Series, vol. ii. pp. 261–3), and William of Canterbury (*Materials*, vol. i. pp. 253–6).

† *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, vol. i. p. 390.

the removal of the materials from a certain spot; the fact forgotten was that the materials were part of a Roman villa used as a quarry for the church; the supernatural element intruded into the place of the forgotten fact was that the devil for purposes of his own removed them. It is not too much to say that this intrusive supernatural element is the means whereby the memory of the fact has been preserved for 800 or 1000 years. It is like the tannin of the Irish bogs, which, by permeating the substance of the most perishable articles, has preserved for fifteen or twenty centuries the remains of weapons, implements, and household stores, down even to kegs of butter, used by the ancient Irish in their crannogs and fen-fortresses, and so enabled us to reconstruct in a large measure the material civilisation of a remote and forgotten period.

I have mentioned these two legends for the purpose of suggesting to you that, even as the record of alleged events, Tradition, however misleading and incorrect, obeys laws as yet imperfectly understood only because imperfectly investigated. But you will observe that when I thus digressed, I was not dealing with Tradition as a witness to specific facts. Nay, not only was I not comparing it with facts, I was using the word Tradition in a much wider sense. Tradition as an object of science means the whole body of the lore of the unedu-

cated. It thus includes customs and institutions, superstitions and medical practice, and many other things beside stories. Stories, too, divide themselves into tales told for amusement, and tales of alleged events intended to be believed. If you put side by side the customs and institutions of different savage races—say of the Australian blackfellows and the Red Indians of North America—amid very considerable divergences you find surprising points of resemblance. And the same thing applies to their beliefs, their medical practice, their witchcraft, their festivals, their stories, and, in short, their way of regarding the world at large and all that is therein, both natural and supernatural. Turning from savage nations to the peasantry of civilised Europe, you will be still more astonished to learn that up to the present time the very same conditions of thought are discernible wherever they are untouched by modern education and the industrial and commercial revolution of the last hundred years. There can only be one interpretation of this. The human mind, alike in Europe and in America, in Africa and in the South Seas, works in the same way, according to the same laws. And the aim of the science of Tradition is to discover those laws, by the examination of their products, the customs and beliefs, the stories and superstitions handed down from generation to generation, to ascertain how those products arose and what

was the order of their development, and so to co-operate with physical anthropology and archæology in writing, as it has never yet been written, the history of civilisation.

If there be one superstition better known, at all events to educated people, than another, it is the common cure for warts, alluded to just now. Ask a peasant anywhere what you should do to cure your warts, and you will at once be told to take a piece of beef, or a piece of bacon, or a potato, or some such object, and rub the wart with it, and then bury, or throw away, the meat or potato. Sometimes you are advised to tie in a string as many knots as you have warts, touch each of the warts with one of the knots, and then throw away, or bury, the string. The warts will disappear as the meat, or potato, or the string, decays. Now, this is a very silly superstition; quite meaningless, you may think, founded on nothing; and you are astonished that any one can believe it. But there you are too hasty. No belief, no superstition in this world is founded upon nothing. Many of them are founded upon what we deem in the light of science to be insufficient data, and built up by erroneous reasoning; but none of them, not one, is founded upon nothing; while very often the reasoning is accurate, the premises only are insecure. Let us look at this cure for warts. In the first place, warts have an unaccountable way—unac-

countable, I believe, even by the most advanced science of the present day—of coming and going. You can never tell whether a wart has come to stay. Consequently, it very often happens that warts do disappear after being treated as the peasant-doctor prescribes. And logicians tell us that there is no commoner blunder in reasoning than that expressed in the phrase "*Post hoc, propter hoc*"—after this, therefore because of it—and that the blunder arises, on the one hand, from not taking into account all the possible causes of an effect; and, on the other hand, from not testing the supposed cause by other evidence. Neither of these logical operations is performed by the peasant. He knows what he has done to the wart; and if the wart disappear, he attributes it without any doubt to his action.

So much for the logical blunder. But what was it that, first of all, caused a wart to be thus treated? Oh, you will say, nobody knows: accident, perhaps. I am not so sure that it was accident; and if nobody knows, perhaps somebody may find out. For, mark this. The essence of the cure for warts is to touch the wart with a substance afterwards allowed to decay, and the wart is expected to vanish just in proportion as the substance which has touched it, and which is now no longer in contact with it, decays. This is a principle of treatment not by any means confined

by the peasant-doctor to warts. Take another case. In September 1892, a fashionably dressed young woman was one day seen hovering about a physician's residence in the north of Berlin. When he went out, she met him, and timidly prayed him to take her, when he had an opportunity, to a dead body. He thought she must be suffering from overstrain or mental disorder, and brusquely refused her. In nowise daunted, however, she begged him earnestly to grant her request, explaining that her object was to remove a deformity. As she said this, she laid bare a delicate white hand blemished by a bony outgrowth, known among surgeons as *exostosis*. The medical man became interested; and it was not long before he stood with her in the presence of a corpse. The lady grasped the cold right hand, and with it repeatedly and silently stroked the ugly excrescence. Then, without speaking, she left the room in all haste; nor was the physician able to learn who she was, or what had led her to seek this means of relief.*

The cure of superficial diseases, like scrofula, wens, and swollen glands, by the touch of a corpse is well known. And that its virtue lay, not in the cold contact, but in the decay which the dead hand was about to undergo, and which was believed to affect the disease touched by the hand, is shown

* *Berliner Tageblatt*, 18th September 1892.

by a practice in Donegal. There, when you meet a funeral, if you are troubled with warts, you can get rid of them by simply throwing some clay from under your right foot in the path by which the funeral is going, and saying as you do so: "Corpse of clay, carry my warts away."* In this case the wart is not itself touched by the corpse; but the clay thrown may come in contact with the corpse; and doubtless in older days it was first applied to the warts, and then placed on, or under, the dead body. The ceremony has become mutilated in the process of civilisation; but the ritual words, which indicate its intention, remain. So, an English cure for boils was to poultice for three days and nights and then to place the poultices, cloths and all, in the coffin of a body about to be buried.†

Let us take another example, where the object is not to cause decay and disappearance, but health and new vigour. When children are born with infantile hernia, it is still not a very uncommon remedy in country places to pass the babe at sunrise through a young ash-tree, split open for the purpose. I need not trouble you with the details of the ceremony, except to say that the tree is immediately afterwards bound up again and

* Professor Haddon in *Folk-lore* (the Transactions of the Folk-lore Soc.), vol. iv. p. 355.

† Thiselton-Dyer, *English Folk-lore*, p. 171.

plastered with mud or clay, in the hope that it will grow together once more, as it generally does. Its recovery is watched with some anxiety, because upon it depends the child's recovery; and it is believed that the child's life and health depend thenceforth upon the life and health of the tree. So far is this belief carried that a friend of mine who caused one such tree to be taken up by the roots and placed in the museum in the county town of a neighbouring county was threatened by the child's father, who declared he would shoot him for it. You will find this remedy mentioned in that delightful English classic, White's *Natural History of Selborne;* and if you go further back you can trace it to Marcellus of Bordeaux, a learned writer on medicine at the beginning of the fifth century, who was physician to no less a personage than the Roman Emperor Theodosius I., and who gravely prescribes it in such cases. In his time a cherry was considered the proper tree for the purpose. The exact kind of tree, however, differs in different countries; and no doubt they are all equally beneficial. For infantile hernia is a condition of body which constantly tends to improve and to cure itself without any treatment; hence the remedy is usually successful.

But what I want you to notice is that, since the child's life and health depend upon the life and health of the tree, the condition of the tree becomes

an index of the condition of the child. The mutual contact of the child and the tree has united them so closely that they have become, as it were, parts of one another, like the Siamese twins. Henceforward, separate and distinct as they are to *our* eyes, in the eyes of the peasant neither of them has really an independent existence. This is a belief which, of course, is only implicit in his mind. He is not conscious of it, because he does not reason the matter out. He simply adheres to the traditional rites and opinions of his forefathers; and they have been for ages in a state of decay. Yet it seems probable that there was a time when, strange and impossible as we may think it, nobody was held to have an individual existence. The idea of individual existence—the notion that every man, woman, and child is a distinct and separate entity, which can be treated by itself, apart from any other—seems to be quite a modern growth in civilisation and in thought, however self-evident it may seem to us, and however absurd the contrary. Among savages, the unit of society is not the individual, but the clan. By *the clan* I do not mean the whole tribe to which the individual savage belongs, but his kindred. The *tribe* is a local organisation, which may include many kindreds or clans; and, on the other hand, the kindred or clan frequently extends beyond the bounds of the local tribe. But wherever it is found, the clan or

kindred is regarded as one single entity: not a corporation, for a corporation is an abstract legal creation of civilised life, though it has perhaps grown up out of the ancient clan. The members of the clan are regarded as members one of another, in a very literal sense, just as you regard your limbs. When a member of the clan has been slain, the others say, not: "The blood of So-and-so has been spilt," but "*Our* blood has been split." The injury is felt by the entire kindred; and it is the business of the entire kin to avenge it. And not only so, but every member of the clan is responsible for a wrong committed by any of them. This is the origin of the *vendetta* as practised in the South of Europe, and by savages everywhere. An interesting trial for murder took place five or six years ago in Dalmatia. Two brothers, having quarrelled with a neighbour about some goats, threw themselves upon him with their daggers; but he defended himself with his pistol, and having killed one, was tried for murder. The jury properly acquitted him, on the ground that he was only acting in self-defence. Hardly had he left the prison when his surviving assailant, with another brother, hastened to his house. They found there only their foe's wife and daughters; and they waited and watched. Soon they espied his younger brother, a boy of fourteen, carrying a pitcher of water. Crying "The devil threw thee in our way,"

they seized him, and stabbed him so quickly that he had no time even to cry out. They were speedily arrested, tried, found guilty of murder, and condemned, the one to death, and the other to eighteen years' penal servitude. They protested against the sentence, and appealed to the Court of Cassation at Vienna. There their counsel had the assurance to plead that "in Dalmatia it is every man's duty to take vengeance where blood has been shed; and that the people feel it right to pursue a family, one of whose members has killed a connection of their own, as long as there is a male descendant." This was a little more than a civilised court of justice could stand; and the sentences were confirmed, in the hope of teaching the Dalmatian savages that the unity of the kin is not a doctrine of modern jurisprudence.* Yet even these Dalmatian savages had progressed a little way towards civilisation; for you will have noted that they would not take a woman's life. A little lower down in the scale vengeance is not so choice. In the Fiji islands the theory was thus explained by an old resident to Mr. Fison, in reference to a bloody feud which had lasted for years, and which arose out of the shooting of a dog: "It's just like this, sir: in a manner o' speakin', say as me and Tom Farrell here has a

* *The Daily News*, 14th July 1894.

difficulty, and gets to punchin' one another. If he plugs me in the eye, I don't feel duty bound to hit him back azackly on the same spot. If I can get well in on him anywheres handy, I ain't partickler. And that's how these niggers reckons it."*

I might cite case after case to show you, not only from the *vendetta*, or blood-feud, but also from many other customs and institutions, ay, and ceremonies, practised both by savages and by the uneducated classes of Europe, and even by the educated classes in many parts of the world, how the individual is regarded merely as a portion of the clan, having no rights apart from it, and in fact no separate existence, and how this idea of separate existence and individual rights and responsibilities has been a slow growth in the evolution of human civilisation. To treat the subject so as to give you the steps in the argument and to illustrate them by proofs would require volumes. I ventured a year or two ago to write a volume on it, and I don't pretend to have treated the subject fully.† If, however, you will for the moment take my word for it, and assume that members of a kin, who perhaps may never have seen one another and never even have heard of one another, are believed to be so closely united,

* Fison and Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, p. 157 note.

† *The Legend of Perseus*, vol. ii.

you will not find it difficult to understand that from intimate contact, such as arises when a child is passed through the very vitals of a young tree, there may, in savage and peasant contemplation, spring an union quite as deep and intricate and permanent. When an adventurous traveller goes into the African forests, and desires to form a league of friendship with some powerful chief, he enters into the blood-covenant with him. Blood is drawn from the traveller's arm and from the chief's arm, and mixed and drunk by both parties, or smeared upon one another's flesh. From that moment the traveller becomes akin to the chief; they are bound to one another just as if they were the children of one mother; they become a part of one another; savage kindred with *all* its consequences is imposed upon them; though the traveller, if he be wise, rarely stays to enter upon many of its duties. The simple contact of the blood has conferred the status of kinship upon both parties and upon all their kindred. This may even be done by accident. Dr. Livingstone was once called in to treat a Balonda woman for a tumour in the arm. In opening the tumour, some of her blood spurted into his eye. She immediately remarked: "You were a friend before now you are a blood-relation." And in saying this she was perfectly serious.*

* Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, p. 489.

In the same way you may unite yourself to a god. Any portion of your body, such as a lock of your hair, or part of your clothing, or even something which has only touched your hand, suspended upon the object of worship, keeps you, so long as it remains there, in continual union with your god. Greeks boys and girls, on arriving at adult life, or before marriage, used to dedicate locks of their hair at the shrines of various gods. Athenian women used to hang up their girdles in the temple of Artemis. This is the origin of the votive offerings you may see by the thousand in churches on the Continent. The wax models of limbs or babies are not merely thank-offerings. They secure the divine influence upon the originals, because they, and through them the originals, are in continual contact with the saint or divine being. I do not mean to say that this notion is always present now to the minds of the people who deposit these offerings. They often do it because it is the customary and proper thing to do; but none the less the origin of the practice is clear.

In West Africa when a man prays to an idol (a fetish, as it is often improperly called) he hammers a nail into it. Not a very reverent way of treating your god; but it only means to keep the god in constant touch with you. You feel safer then. There is a West African god in the British Museum bristling with nails; and Miss Kingsley,

whose amusing and valuable account of her travels in the French Congo should be read by everybody, showed me another that she had brought home, loaded with nails and various other pieces of iron stuck into it in all directions. For the same reason, people drop pins into wishing-wells, or tear shreds from their garments and fasten them on the bushes or trees which overhang the well. The well and the bush are (or were) sacred. They were a god in the olden time, or at least the manifestations of a powerful spirit. *Now* the practice is continued merely from habit. But the habit, like all habits, had once a reason, good or bad; and the reason was the desire for union with a supernatural being.

If, however, it can do you so much good to deposit a part of yourself upon the god; on the other hand, if some such part of you as a lock of hair, the paring of your nail, a piece of your food or a rag of your clothes, get into the possession of an evil-disposed person, an enemy or witch, no end of damage can be done to you. For just in the same way as relatives are, in the savage view, parts of one another, affected by everything that is done to either of them, so any part of your person or clothing, or even your property, though to outward appearance detached, is still in union with you, and so much in union, that anything which affects it affects you. In New England a few

years since, a man had his foot crushed in a railway accident; and it was necessary to cut it off. His friends held a solemn consultation as to what was to be done with the amputated limb. If it were buried, the stump would continue to be painful, and the unfortunate man would be troubled by disagreeable sensations, until the foot had entirely decayed away. So they resolved to burn it; and burn it they did, to save him from this inconvenience. In Sussex, when a man cuts his hair, the clippings must not be carelessly thrown away, for if a bird were to find any of them and work them into its nest, the man would suffer from headache until it had finished. Or in case a toad got hold of a girl's long back hairs, it would be quite enough to give her a cold in her head.*

Witches are more serious still; and all over the world, among peoples in what is called the lower culture, the greatest care is taken to prevent hair, nails, and other portions of the body, or garments and things that have touched the body, from getting into the possession of a conjurer. This is why lovers in their tenderest moments exchange locks of hair. It is the most touching proof of confidence they can give. They are henceforth in the power of one another for good or evil, for the faithless one is so easily punished.

* Hartland, *Legend of Perseus*, vol. ii. p. 132.

In some parts of England, a girl forsaken by her lover is advised to boil the lock of his hair, and keep it boiling; for whilst it is simmering in the pot, he is simmering too, and can get no rest. Here let me advise any young lady who has a suitor she does not care for, not on any account to give him a lock of her hair. A tale is told in Corsica of a girl who would not listen to a poor young man. The disconsolate youth prayed her at least to give him a single hair which he might treasure in memory of her. She was, however, too clever for him. She pulled a hair out of a camel-hair sieve which hung on a nail in the kitchen, and sent him that. In the dead of night he worked a charm on the precious hair, and waited, in expectation that the maiden would appear, compelled by his incantation. By-and-by a bumping and fumbling was heard at the door. With beating heart he rushed to open it, when there bounced into his arms not the lady of his love, but the sieve.* In Africa the superstition is quite common; and of course the negro has carried it to America. A lady, writing about half a century ago on the island of Antigua, relates that a negro boy had been drowned. One of his kinswomen had had a quarrel with an acquaintance. She contrived to cut off some hair from her acquaint-

* *Revue des Traditions Populaires*, vol. ix. p. 462.

ance's head; and this she put in the dead boy's hand, just before his coffin was screwed down, whispering in his ear the word: "Remember!" The negro who told the tale said: "De pic'nee jumby [that is, the boy's ghost] trouble he [namely, the lady who had lost the hair] so dat he no know war for do, till at last he go out of he head, an' he neber been no good since." And a powerful negro conjúrer told a friend of mine: "I could save you, or ruin you, if I could get hold of so much as an eye-winker, or the pealing of one freckle." *

Well, the cure for warts with which we started has led us a long way. But I hope I have succeeded in showing you that it is not entirely foolish; that it is not founded on nothing, but on a philosophy that goes very deep down into savage life, and that crops up in the most unexpected way right in the midst of civilised life, and explains a great variety of practices. I know there are great gaps in my demonstration. That is because the subject is a large one; and they cannot be helped. You cannot put a gallon of beer into a pint pot.

I might go through a long list of beliefs and practices you may still find among the peasantry of the British Islands, and show you how one after another was the decayed representative of some part

* I have cited these and many other instances of the superstition in *The Legend of Perseus*, vol. ii.

of the religion or the philosophy of our ancestors far away in those misty prehistoric ages, when they dwelt in caves, or in huts, amid the rocks and the marshes, or in great camps, the remains of which are yet visible on the heights around us. And I think I should be able to make it clear that these beliefs and practices are not arbitrary or capricious, but the logical result of principles accepted by a people in the state of savagery as the explanation of the mystery of the great world in which they found themselves, and which yet puzzles the wisest heads among us. But we pride ourselves on being a practical nation; and I feel that I can hope to excite only a languid interest in the study of folk-lore, unless I can offer you some suggestions of the way in which it may be turned to useful account. Let me take it as an axiom that there is no science —no branch of methodised knowledge, that is— that has not its practical application. When Franklin, playing with his kite in a thunder-storm, brought down sparks from the heavens, he was learning the accidence of that science of Electricity which has given us the Telegraph and Telephone, and which has in store for future generations a power we can hardly as yet conceive. But how many men of his generation were there who did not regard his experiments as mere amusement, unworthy of the attention of serious persons? Priestley, turning from the bewilder-

ments of theology to trifle with "dephlogisticated air," was helping to lay the foundations of modern Chemistry, to which we owe so much. So, when Professor Tylor, then unknown to fame, gave himself up to the eccentric study of savage life and savage ideas which issued in those two great works, the *Early History of Mankind* and *Primitive Culture*, nothing would have seemed more unlikely than that his inquiries were to lead to results of value to the maintenance and prosperity of the British Empire. When we consider, however, not merely the vast extent, but the almost infinite diversity of races in all stages of culture, over which we rule—when we recall how impossible it is to govern any people properly unless you understand the ideas and the motives that actuate them, and are able by means of your knowledge to anticipate in some measure their feelings, and to sympathise with them—how important then becomes the effort to grasp the significance of their customs and beliefs, their prejudices and their ideals! Who would have imagined that the obscure and technical details of the land tenure of the aboriginal tribes of India could throw any light upon the condition of Ireland? Yet it is hardly too much to say that, if we had been in possession of India at the time when the conquest and settlements of Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries took place, and had then understood as we now understand

the land tenures of India, there would have been no Irish Land Question to worry us to-day. We went in with a rough hand and broke up the fabric of Irish society, imposing upon the land the incongruous feudal theories of English law. We did this, not because we desired to do injustice, but because the Elizabethan lawyers were utterly ignorant of any system of law beside their own. We went to India, and found a state of things in relation to the ownership of land so different from that to which we had been accustomed that at first we were baffled; nor was it without careful and long-continued study, and many mistakes, that we succeeding in comprehending its principles. And then, scholars, turning to the old Irish laws, discovered that on this point the Irish traditions and the traditions of the aborigines of India presented so many traits in common that it might fairly be said the systems were the same. They threw at once a flood of light upon one another. Both were systems of customary law; both were rooted in a common philosophy of the essential unity of the kin; and its consequence, the common ownership by the kin, was the same in both. Our own system, although we did not know it, grew up out of similar conditions; but they had been long disturbed and distorted by the vicissitudes of our earlier history and overlaid by our developing civilisation. Traces of them, however, are still to

be met with up and down the country. Indeed, the open fields of Upton St. Leonard's are a remnant, battered and decayed, of course, of such a state of society and thought; and we cannot fully explain their existence without seeking help from the Brehon laws of Ireland and the folk-lore, not merely of India, but of other savage races.*

Again, what waste of precious human lives might have been avoided in our manifold dealings with tribes in the lower culture if we had been acquainted with their modes of thought! Collisions between white men and savages often occur, and are perhaps unavoidable, from theft and other offences on the part of the savages, and from summary punishment—revenge, rather—on the part of the white men, and from recklessness and sheer cruelty on the part of settlers, traders, and sailors. But these are by no means the only causes. A well-known missionary tells how he and another landed

* The parish of Upton St. Leonard's, near Gloucester, preserved several features of archaic life. Of these the open fields were the most conspicuous; but, alas! an order of the Board of Agriculture has at length permitted their enclosure. The rights of the parties have been settled; many of the open lands have now (1899) been actually enclosed; houses are arising upon them; and in a few months, or a year or two at most, these relics of an earlier state of society will be themselves things of the past. On the subject of the open field system, see *The Village Community*, by G. L. Gomme (Walter Scott, 1890).

on one of the South Sea Islands, called Aneiteum, and, walking about, came to a hut, which they were about to enter, when half a dozen voices called to them to stop. They then learnt that in the hut was a pig, being fattened for an approaching feast, and the hut was consequently tabooed to strangers. Now, *Taboo* is one of the most powerful institutions among the Polynesians; and it has given a word to the English language. Anything on which a taboo is set is thereby rendered sacred, *anathema*. Nobody can touch it or approach it under the severest penalties, often nothing less than death. So it was death for a stranger to go near a pig when it was being fed in anticipation of a feast. And had the missionaries been ignorant of the language, the probability is that they would have violated the taboo and been slain in consequence.*

The blood-feud, or vendetta, which I have already explained, is responsible for the loss of many lives in the intercourse between white men and savages. For, as I have shown you, it is not necessary to retaliate upon the very man who commits the crime. Any of his kindred will do as well. If, therefore, a quarrel arise between white strangers and the natives, and any of the natives be killed, the death of any white man who may be thrown among the survivors is deemed only just and equitable; and

* Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, p. 370.

this will be repeated until the number of strangers put to death equals the number of the natives killed. Civilised men, not understanding this law, have regarded the natives merely as bloodthirsty savages, and have made not less bloody reprisals, which have only perpetuated the feud and led to more terrible results.

The mention of missionaries leads me to say how lamentable it is that missionaries should be sent out, as they are by all our missionary societies, utterly ignorant of the customs and beliefs of the peoples whom they are going to try to convert to Christianity. At one time there was an excuse for their ignorance, for they only shared it with every one else in Europe. But there is none now, when so much is known about most savage and barbarous races. Let me give you an example of the quandary in which a missionary ignorant on these matters may find himself. One who laboured among the Australian aborigines on the Murray River relates that when he first went among them, one of the young men took a fancy to him and adopted him as a brother. It is not quite clear from the narrative whether he went through any ceremony; but probably he did, as he and the young native regarded themselves afterwards as brothers. "I one day," he tells us, "said to his wife: 'I am John's brother; you are my sister.' The idea was, to her, most ridiculous. With a

laugh she said: 'No, you are my husband!'" This is an excellent illustration of the length to which the doctrine of the unity of the kin is carried by some savages: even to absolute oneness. The missionary of course had no notion of this: it was one of the things he ought to have known at starting, if he were to avoid needless difficulties; one of the things he had slowly to learn by experience—in this instance ludicrous, but experience that might in easily conceivable circumstances have been tragic. The fact is that such knowledge is not less necessary to Christian enterprise than to good government and successful commercial intercourse.

Again. Theologians trained in civilised life, with the heritage of three thousand years of metaphysical subtleties, forget that the savage mind is unused to their modes of thought, and quite unfitted to grasp their conceptions or to find its way among their distinctions. They start with the notion that all the traditions of the heathen are the suggestions of the devil, or the vile and abominable inventions of fallen human nature, instead of being, as they are, the evidence of the upward strivings of humanity from its primitive condition. Hence, they consider that they have nothing to do with heathen customs but to stamp them out, and to impose their own instead. Not having any

* Fison and Howitt, *op. cit.* p. 289.

common ground of sympathy to base their appeals upon, their work is retarded. They too often succeed only in creating confusion, relaxing the bonds of morality which they find, without effectually substituting any new ones.

In saying this I do not wish to depreciate their noble and self-denying labours. I sympathise profoundly with their efforts. I only want to point out that their methods are not always the wisest, because they are ignorant, and therefore clumsy, methods. This opinion is supported by a vast mass of evidence, of which I will only quote the latest—that given by Miss Kingsley in her *Travels in West Africa*. "Taken as a whole," she says, "the missionaries must be regarded as superbly brave, noble-minded men who go and risk their own lives, and often those of their wives and children, and definitely sacrifice their personal comfort and safety to do what, from their point of view, is their simple duty; but it is their methods of working that have produced in West Africa the results which all truly interested in West Africa must deplore; and one is bound to make an admission that goes against one's insular prejudice—that the Protestant English missionaries have had most to do with rendering the African useless." "The missionary," she goes on to say, "to the African has done what my father found them doing to the Polynesians—'regarding the native minds as so

many jugs only requiring to be emptied of the stuff that is in them and refilled with the particular form of dogma he is engaged in teaching, in order to make them the equals of the white race.'"* He forgets that Christianity is, if not the product of, at least inseparably bound up with, a high form of civilisation; and the savage is not fitted for it without long years, and perhaps generations, of training, which must begin on the missionary's part by a complete understanding of and sympathy with the native, and by a gradual process must lift the native up out of his abject condition at one and the same time into Christianity and civilisation. Of course the better and wiser missionaries fully recognise this. I need only mention the names of William Ellis, William Wyatt Gill, Duff Macdonald, James Sibree, Dr. Codrington, and Dr. Callaway, as types of a class to which the cause of humanity, as well as that of science, owes a deep debt of gratitude. Would that all were such as these!

Here let me say in passing that it is a disgrace to our Government that there is no public institution to which a young man who is going out, either as a Government official in one of our numerous dependencies, or as a missionary, can go to be instructed in Anthropology. Alone, or almost alone,

* Miss Kingsley, *Travels n West Africa*, p. 659.

among civilised Governments, ours does nothing to promote the study of savage races. Others have colleges for training in anthropological subjects, or at least a Department of State, like the Bureau of Ethnology at Washington, for the systematic collection and comparison of everything which may throw light on the tribes beneath their sway. Our indifference and contempt, on the other hand, are carried so far, that it is the universal testimony of Government officials that interest in the subject peoples is absolutely discouraged. An official who is known to undertake such inquiries is regarded as a trifler, and is a marked man. He can never look forward to promotion. And yet, ruling as we do over a greater variety of nationalities than any other European people, it is beyond comparison more to our advantage than to that of any other thoroughly to understand the workings of the native mind. It requires but little insight to be assured that we might enormously strengthen our hold upon India if our Government were to take a different line, and were to encourage, instead of discouraging, civil and military officials to inquire systematically into and report upon the ideas and practices of the races of that vast continent. Soldiers in particular have time on their hands, which they too often waste in idleness with all the evils that attend it. How much better it would be if they were given to understand that they were

expected to take an intelligent and scientific interest in the humanity about them, and that substantial contributions to our information on the subject would be taken into consideration in reckoning their services to the Empire! Intelligent and scientific interest would lead to sympathy. The natives would be more wisely treated, treated like human beings, instead of, as they too often are, like dogs. And the popularity of our rule and our consequent power would be multiplied a hundredfold.

Of our Colonial Governors, only one has taken up the matter seriously—Sir William MacGregor, lately Governor of British New Guinea. But his testimony is express. "Ever since the declaration of sovereignty," he says, "as much attention as possible has been given to the peculiar usages, customs, and habits of the natives. It has been felt that no man, or body of men, can rule justly and wisely a people with whose customs, usages, and inner life they are unacquainted. In legislation and in executive administration it is imperative that, in a country such as this is, with a mere handful of Europeans and a numerous savage and semi-savage population, the officers of the Government should not only become acquainted with the hereditary and traditional customs of the natives, but that they should also know their superstitions, their aims, their inter-tribal family and domestic

polity, and even their prejudices."* Golden words! We can only hope that Sir William MacGregor's tenure of office continued long enough to impress this principle as a lasting tradition upon the Government of British New Guinea, and that his example may speedily be followed elsewhere.

But you will tell me: "All this is very remote from us. We are neither Government officials nor missionaries. What is the value of folklore to *us?*"

Well, what I have been saying about Government officials and missionaries applies—in a lesser degree, it is true, but yet applies—to everybody who has to do—and who does not?—with the peasantry and the uneducated classes of our own countrymen. The more perfect your interest in and your sympathy with them, the more completely you can identify yourselves with their modes of thought, the greater your influence for good upon them. The conflict of the classes and the masses about which we hear so much to-day is all the bitterer because of the chasm which education has opened between high and low Three hundred years ago the upper classes, as they are called, thought and felt much more nearly like their poorer brethren than now.

* *Colonial Reports*, No. 131, British New Guinea, p. 34.

They accepted the same superstitions; they looked at the world with the same eyes. It is true we are doing our best to diminish the distance that has grown between the educated and uneducated. But it takes time; and depend upon it it is worth while trying to condescend to the lower level, in order the more quickly to raise up those who are there to your own.

Then I have tried to show you that the ideas of "the folk" have an interest of their own. Properly studied, they unveil the past of the human race in a way for which we look in vain in the material monuments of antiquity. The legends and practices localised here and there all over the country glorify many a fair hillside, many a majestic building, many a sombre ruin, and lend an additional charm to our holidays and our travels. Amazing to us is the veneration once paid to the body of Edward II. in Gloucester Cathedral, amazing are the stories that grew up around it. Not the least amazing is the tradition that he was drawn from Berkeley Castle to his grave by white harts. That was a tradition that grew up in accordance with a law of the human mind revealed by folklore; but it is not for me now to strain your patience by recounting other examples even in this country.

Nor is it only our summer holidays that may be

rendered more attractive by the study of folklore. As we sit by the fire in the long winter evenings and read the masterpieces of literature, as I hope some of us sometimes do, we cannot appreciate even these without some knowledge of the ideas current at the time they were written. Take down the mighty Shakespeare, and perhaps you think you can enjoy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as the audience for whom he wrote it enjoyed it, without concerning yourself about the silly fairy beliefs of our ancestors. But let me ask you What do you know about Robin Goodfellow? Do you imagine that Robin Goodfellow—a mere name to you—conveys anything like the meaning to your mind that it did to those for whom the name represented a still living belief, and who had the stories about him at their fingers' ends? Or let me ask you Why did the fairies dance on moonlight nights? or Have you ever thought why it is that in English literature, and in English literature alone, the fairy realm finds a place in the highest works of imagination? As my predecessor, Mr. Alfred Nutt, in one of his presidential addresses to the Folklore Society, eloquently said:

"We could not blot out from English poetry its visions of the fairyland without a sense of irreparable loss. No other literature save that of Greece alone can vie with ours in its pictures

of the land of fantasy and glamour, or has brought back from that mysterious realm of unfading beauty treasures of more exquisite and enduring charm." What is the reason of this rare distinction? For answers to such questions you must go to folklore.

But there is one literature of more profound and far-reaching influence than even English literature. I refer to the Hebrew literature contained in the Bible. It is full of tales, of allusions to custom, and of descriptions of ritual, which can only be explained by folklore. More than this, what is called the "the Higher Criticism" has demonstrated by consideration of the internal evidence that many of the books of the Old Testament are of a much later date than they were long supposed to be, though often embodying, revising, and otherwise manipulating earlier materials, either written or oral. All commentators of repute are practically agreed upon this. Even the most orthodox and conservative are too learned and too candid—too judicial, in a word—to deny altogether the force of the destructive criticism that has riddled the old position through and through, or to refuse their assent entirely to its methods and many of its results. It is merely a question of less or more, of this or that particular conclusion. It is generally recognised that theological arguments have no validity against

literary and historical evidence. They are not in the same plane; they do not deal with the same subject-matter. If then, for example, we are no longer to accept the Pentateuch as written by Moses, if the narrative be nothing more than a collection of traditions worked up in various ways by various writers, and more than once re-edited, if it be not in the strict sense of the term historical, what are we to say of the laws? Here it is that folklore helps us. The distinction between clean and unclean animals; the ordinance that he who touched a dead body, or even came into the same tent with it, should be impure and unable to go into the sanctuary for seven days, and until the priest had sprinkled him with the water of separation; the decree that, when a man died childless, his brother should take his widow, in the hope of continuing the family of the deceased—these are ancient customs, far more ancient than any date which can be assigned to Moses, world-wide, or based upon ideas that are world-wide; and for them and many others folklore, and folklore alone, has an adequate explanation. In fact, the great mass of Hebrew customs and a considerable proportion of Hebrew stories are neither more nor less than the particular national form assumed by customs and stories and superstitions which are common to mankind, and inevitably arise in certain stages of civilisation.

Science has not yet solved every question in connection with the history of Hebrew myths and customs; but the late Professor Robertson Smith, in his great fragment on *The Religion of the Semites*, has led the way; and enough has been done to show that we are on the right path. Every new discovery helps us forward; and researches in Hebrew civilisation will at no distant day be brought into line with those in other departments of the Science of Man.

I must apologise for detaining you so long. I hope I have not wearied you in trying to show you that the science of Folklore is one of real importance, full of interest, full of surprises to those who are unacquainted with it. It has vast possibilities that will revolutionise our conceptions of human history. Already it has co-operated with prehistoric archæology to establish beyond cavil that civilisation has been evolved through long centuries of struggle from a low form of savagery. What is behind that primitive condition it leaves to other sciences to say. And it has rendered clear that, underlying all differences of race and nationality, we have a common human nature, common to the savage Tasmanian or Bushman and the cultivated Englishman, a common mental constitution which reasons everywhere on the same principles, though it may not attain everywhere to the same results, because it does

not start from the same premises. Folklore has lent a new emphasis to the truth enshrined in the ancient declaration that God "made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

In case any readers of the foregoing paper may be sufficiently interested to pursue the subject, I append a list of a few books which they will find helpful. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. It only aims at guiding such as wish to obtain a general view of the scope and method of Folklore. Readers who desire more than this will not be long in discovering from the works named below hints for further research.

"The Handbook of Folklore." Edited by George Laurence Gomme, F.S.A., 1890.

[One of the publications of the Folklore Society. It affords a general view of the study, with hints on collecting and the scientific work to be done.]

"Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilisation," by Edward B. Tylor, D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S. London, John Murray, 3rd ed., 1878.

"Primitive Culture; Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom," by the same. Same publisher. 2 vols. 1st ed. 1871; 3rd ed. 1891.

[In these two works Dr. Tyler laid the foundation of the scientific study of the evolution of human ideas and civilisation.]

"Custom and Myth," by Andrew Lang, M.A. London, Longmans, 1884.

"Myth, Ritual, and Religion," by the same. Same publishers. 2 vols. 1st ed., 1887. 2nd ed. 1899.

[In the latter of these two works Mr. Lang, applying Professor Tylor's methods of inquiry, demolished once for all the theories of the philological school of Mythologists, represented in this country primarily by Professor Max Müller. In the new edition, however, he has embodied some hypotheses, expressed first in his recent book on *The Making of Religion*, which do not command unqualified assent.]

"The Golden Bough: a Study in Comparative Religion," by J. G. Frazer, M.A. 2 vols. London, Macmillan, 1890.

[A study in detail of some profoundly interesting aspects of savage religion.]

"The Blood Covenant: a Primitive Rite and its Bearings on Scripture," by H. Clay Trumbull, D.D. London, Redway, 1887.

"Lectures on the Religion of the Semites. First Series: The Fundamental Institutions." By W. Robertson Smith, M.A., LL.D. Edinburgh, A. & C. Black, 1889. 2nd ed., 1894.

[These two books contain the first intelligible account of the theory of the Blood-Covenant and Sacrifice. The relations of the god to his worshippers, holy places and objects are, among other important subjects, treated of in *The Religion of the Semites*.]

"The Legend of Perseus: a Study of Tradition in Story, Custom and Belief." By Edwin Sidney Hartland, F.S.A. 3 vols. London, D. Nutt, 1894–1896.

[I venture to include this, because the second volume, dealing with the Life-token, sets out fully the reasoning of the earlier part of the foregoing paper, and pursues the subject in directions not touched on above.]

"Ethnology in Folklore," by George Laurence Gomme, F.S.A. London, Kegan Paul & Co., Limited, 1892.

[The main object of this little book is to determine

the value of folklore as evidence of race; but, under the head of the Localisation of Primitive Belief, it includes an account of the worship at sacred wells and trees.]

"An Introduction to Folklore," by Marian Roalfe Cox. London, D. Nutt, 1895.

[A popular introduction written in a lively and pleasant style.]

Generally, the publications of the Folklore Society, of which "The Handbook of Folklore" has already been mentioned. Among those bearing on the subject of this paper may be mentioned:

"Folk-Medicine: a chapter in the History of Culture." By William George Black, F.S.A., Scot., 1883.

And numerous articles in

"Folklore" (the Transactions of the Society). Nine volumes published, 1890–98, still proceeding.

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# OSSIAN AND THE OSSIANIC LITERATURE

"Woody Morven and echoing Sora, and Selma with its silent halls!—we all owe them a debt of gratitude, and when we are unjust enough to forget it, may the Muse forget us!"

These words of Matthew Arnold's fairly reflect the feelings towards Ossian and the literature connected with his name of such cultivated Englishmen as concern themselves at all with the subject; their knowledge of it is derived from James Macpherson; their appreciation depends upon whether or no they share Arnold's admiration for the undoubted beauties of his remarkable work; their attitude towards the critical questions involved differs but little from that of the combatants in the great critical battle urged a century ago over the authenticity of the so-called Ossian. As the following pages ignore Macpherson altogether, I must briefly state the opinion held of his work by most competent scholars. He undoubtedly had some knowledge of the Ossianic ballad literature

existing in the Highlands in his day, and he worked up many of its themes into his English Ossian, which is, however, almost as much his own composition as "Paradise Lost" is the composition of Milton. He suffered himself to maintain the existence of a Gaelic original which he claimed to have rendered faithfully; one was published many years later, but it is probably a mere retranslation into Gaelic of the English Ossian. For the student, whether of Celtic myth and saga, of Celtic archæology, or of Gaelic style and literary form, Macpherson's poems are worthless; they disregard the traditional versions of the legends, they depart from the traditional representation of the material life depicted in the old and genuine texts, and they utterly ignore the traditional conventions of Gaelic style. But Macpherson's flashes of genuine inspiration, and the importance of his work in preparing the romantic movement of the nineteenth century, will always secure for him a high place on the roll of Scottish writers.

Who then is the Ossian and what the Ossianic literature that form the subject of the following pages? It will be convenient to take the latter question first.

The body of Gaelic literature connected with the name of Ossian is of very considerable extent and of respectable antiquity. The oldest texts, prose for the most part, but also in verse, are preserved in Irish

MSS. of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and go back to a period from 150 to 250 years older at least. The bulk of Ossianic literature is, however, of later date as far as the form under which it has come down to us is concerned. A number of important texts, prose for the most part, are preserved in MSS. of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but were probably redacted in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries. But by far the largest mass consists of narrative poems, as a rule dramatic in structure. These have come down to us in MSS. written in Scotland from the end of the fifteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century, in Ireland from the sixteenth down to the middle of the present century. The Gaelic speaking peasantry, alike in Ireland and Scotland, have preserved orally a large number of these ballads, as also a great mass of prose narratives, the heroes of which are Ossian and his comrades. A rough classification may be made into (*a*) pre-mediæval texts (vouched for by MSS. of the twelfth century and earlier), (*b*) mediæval (MSS. of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) and (*c*) post mediæval texts. Whilst there are marked differences in style and tone between the different sections, as well as between the specific Irish and Scotch versions of the third section, this body of literature is on the whole wonderfully homogeneous: themes, characterisation, personages, *locale*, have undergone scarce

any change from the eleventh century to the present day.

Were all Ossianic texts preserved in MSS. older than the present century to be printed they would fill some eight to ten thousand 8vo pages. The mere bulk of the literature, even if we allow for considerable repetition of incident, arrests attention. If we further recall that for the last five hundred years this body of romance has formed the chief imaginative recreation of Gaeldom, alike in Ireland and Scotland, and that a peasantry unable to read or write has yet preserved it almost entire, its claims to consideration and study will appear manifest. No literature can, for so many centuries, maintain itself and preserve its plastic vitality without good and sufficient reason. An endeavour to realise the nature of the appeal which this literature made and still makes to the Gaelic race at once brings us to the question—is it wholly a work of imagination, or has it preserved, in howsoever fanciful a form, some record of historic fact? And thus we are led back to our starting point—who were Ossian, and the heroes associated with him?

If we turn to the Irish annals we find that Oisín (the proper spelling of the name phonetically transcribed Ossian by Macpherson, a transcription which I retain for convenience' sake) was the son of Finn mac Cumhail, who is asserted to have been

the leader of a band of professional soldiers and to have lived in the third century of our era. Irish historical writers of the tenth and eleventh centuries record Finn's death, some in 252, some in 283. In so far as an historical thread connects the scattered episodes of the cycle, it is to be found in the rivality between Finn's band (the Clanna Baoisgne) and the Clanna Morna of which Goll was leader, and in the relations of both bodies to the internecine feuds of the Irish kings. Finn is represented as quarrelling with Cormac, son of Art, the most famous high-king in Irish legend, whose daughter, Grainne, he had married, and the feud thus formed was carried on by the children, culminating ultimately in the battle of Gabhra, in which Cairbre, Cormac's son, and Finn's grandson, Oscar son of Ossian, the Achilles of the cycle, fell at each other's hands. The Fenian host perished almost to the last man in this battle, only a few surviving, with miraculously prolonged life, until the coming of Patrick two centuries later.

How far can this legendary history be accepted as in any sense a genuine record of events? In the first place we must note that it was firmly believed in by Irish historical writers of the eleventh century, men fully abreast of all the learning of their time, by no means devoid of the critical instinct and in possession of great masses of tribal tradition and genealogical record which have

perished; on the other hand they lived centuries after the alleged events, they differ considerably among themselves as to the chronology of the cycle, and they were, like all men of the middle ages, unable to examine tradition critically as we moderns do. Fortunately there is little need for me to discuss the credibility or otherwise of the historic records concerning Finn, his family and his band of warriors. They may be accepted or rejected according to individual bent of mind without really modifying our view of the literature. For when we turn to the romances, whether in prose or verse, we find that, although the history is professedly the same as that of the annals, firstly we are transported to a world entirely romantic, in which divine and semi-divine beings, ungainly monsters and giants play a prominent part, in which men and women change shapes with animals, in which the lives of the heroes are miraculously prolonged—in short, we find ourselves in a land of Faery; secondly, we find that the historic conditions in which the heroes are represented as living do not for the most part answer to anything we know or can surmise of the third century. For Finn and his warriors are perpetually on the watch to guard Ireland against the attacks of oversea-raiders, styled Lochlannach by the narrators and by them undoubtedly thought of as Norsemen. But the latter, as is well known, only came to Ireland at the

close of the eighth century, and the heroic period of their invasions extended for about a century, from 825 to 925; to be followed by a period of comparative settlement during the tenth century, until at the opening of the eleventh century the battle of Clontarf, fought by Brian, the great South Irish chieftain, marked the break up of the separate Teutonic organisation and the absorption of the Teutons into the fabric of Irish life. In these pages then we may disregard the otherwise interesting question of historic credibility in the Ossianic romances: firstly, because they have their being in a land unaffected by fact; secondly, because if they ever did reflect the history of the third century, the reflection was distorted in after times, and a pseudo-history based upon events of the ninth and tenth centuries was substituted for it. What the historian seeks for in legend is far more a picture of the society in which it took rise than a record of the events which it commemorates. We shall see presently what traces, if any, of third century custom and manners are preserved by extant texts of the Ossianic cycle.

### (*a*) Pre-mediæval Ossianic Romance.

The pre-mediæval remains of the cycle, contained in MSS. copied in the twelfth and eleventh centuries from earlier MSS., though not very

numerous are yet numerous enough to furnish prototypes of well-nigh every mode of conceiving the character and presenting the fortunes of the heroes which we find in the modern texts. All the texts which we know definitely to be older than the twelfth century would probably not fill more than one hundred pages, but these hundred pages contain in germ the many thousand pages of the mediæval and post-mediæval literature. These early fragments of the legend (it is seldom we get more than a fragment) are every whit as "romantic" as the later tales and ballads. Indeed the further back we trace these Fenian tales, the more markedly mythical do we find them. A remarkable tale contained in the oldest Irish profane MS., the Book of the Dun Cow, and probably as old as the eighth century, brings Finn, supposed to have died in the third century, to life again as a sixth-century Ulster Kinglet, Mongan. Finn-Mongan has a dispute with Dallan Forgall, chief bard of Ireland, concerning some event of the third century. To substantiate his contention he calls up from the other world Caoilte mac Ronain, the fleetest foot among the Fenian heroes, whose testimony, in favour of the king, is accepted as final. Another long poem, entitled Finn and the Phantoms, tells how Finn in company with Caoilte and Ossian, after outriding their companions whilst hunting, came at nightfall to a house of whose existence in

that district they knew nothing. They were received by a grey giant, a hag with three heads on her thin neck, and a headless man with one eye in his breast; nine bodies rise on one side of the house, nine on the other, and raise nine harsh shrieks—"Not melodious was that concert." The hideous crew attack the heroes, who are sore put to it to defend themselves until sunlight, when the tribe of monsters falls dead on the spot. Again another tale tells how the Fianna of Melgi chase and kill Aige transformed into a deer.

Some of these pre-mediæval texts are specially noteworthy in view of their relation to the later romances. Thus one long poem, put into Finn's mouth, employs that favourite device of Irish story-telling, topographical enumeration; the mention of hills, or streams, or burial mounds, calls forth the appropriate legend for each. As we shall see presently, one of the most important of the later texts is built upon this model. Another poem, also ascribed to Finn, strikes a note which remains dominant throughout the entire range of Ossianic literature, the note of keen and vivid feeling for certain natural conditions. It is a brief description of winter:

> "A tale here for you, oxen lowing, winter's snowing, summer's passing; wind from the north, high and cold, low the sun and short his course, wildly tossing the wave of the sea.

> The fern burns deep red. Men wrap themselves closely, the wild goose raises her wonted cry, cold seizes the wing of the bird; 'tis the season of ice; sad my tale!"

A poem ascribed to Caoilte anticipates a very common theme in the later romances. Three strange hunters come oversea bringing with them a hound of the King of Hiruatha (*i.e.* Norway); they slay one of Finn's men, Duban, and the Fianna demand their death, but Finn declares he will accept the hound as compensation. After pledging themselves thereto by sun and moon and sea and earth, the strangers kill the dog and fly, carrying its hide with them, to the north-east, passing Scotland on the way. The Fianna assemble in pursuit and heap up a cairn before starting, each man flinging a stone upon it, whilst old and young swear that they will not retreat until the stone retreat for dread of the foreigners.

Finally the following poem, which is ascribed to Caoilte and figures him as surviving until the time of the Talcend (*i.e.* Patrick, according to a gloss in the MS.), embodies the most famous and characteristic *motif* of Ossianic legend, that which differentiates it from all other bodies of mythic and heroic romance. The hero, in his supernaturally prolonged old age, thus laments the glories of his youth and prime:

Small to-night the vigour of my feet,
I know my body is flesh;
Good was the running of my feet
Until the Talcend came.

Swift were my feet,
In my head my eyes kept ward,
My arms were wont to feed the carrion crow,
My weapons ne'er lacked a shout of victory.

. . . . .

I and Oisin, the son of Finn,
In unison we dealt our blows.
Mighty in sooth were our feats,
Small the boast we made of them.

In 1871, the Rev. J. G. Campbell picked up in Tiree a fragmentary lament for Caoilte, ascribed to Ossian, which runs thus:

Sorrowful am I after Caoilte,
Since my contemporaries are not alive.
I am filled with sadness, agony, and pain
At parting with my foster brother,
Caoilte, my true foster-brother,
With whom I could win victory and banner;
Caoilte, my perfect fellow-warrior,
A relief to the Fians in time of need.

The one poem is at least a thousand years old, the other still lives on the lips of the Gaelic peasant, but in tone, sentiment, expression they might be contemporary.

Attention has already been drawn to certain

aspects of the pre-mediæval Ossianic legend, as presented in texts which must, as we have seen, be at least older than the twelfth century and which may belong in part to a period several centuries earlier. I will now recapitulate those features upon which, for the purposes of this study, I lay special stress. The chief heroes of the legend are Finn himself, his son Ossian and his sister's son Caoilte; the latter is pre-eminently the witness to, and relater of the mighty deeds achieved by himself and his fellow warriors; he, it is, who comes back from the other world to corroborate Finn, re-incarnated as Mongan and living three centuries and a half after the period assigned to him in the annals; he lives on until the days of Patrick and laments his departed strength and his lost comrades. But Ossian also shares this characteristic of supernaturally prolonged life and keen regret for vanished youth; the poem which describes the visit of the three heroes to the Phantoms introduces him as Guaire the blind, contrasting his sad lot with that of his hearers, and it is not until late in the poem that the blind minstrel reveals his identity with the famous son of Finn. Thus the earliest texts of the cycle represent it as miraculously preserved for the edification and delight of after ages; from the outset the legend, thrown back into the past, comes before the Gael as a tale of—

> The old days that seem to be
> Much older than any history
> That is written in any book—

and breathes a note of lament and protest. From the outset too we find ourselves in a land of wizardry and shape shifting, a land which even the earliest hearers and tellers of those tales must have felt to be unreal. For the warriors who dwell in this land the chase is of scarce less moment than warfare, they engage in hunts which lead to a realm of glamour and illusion, they come and go over Northern Seas, receiving visits from and paying visits to the far off Scandinavian lands. As is but natural this hunter race is sensitive to the passing moods of Nature, and to the ways of the wild animals they chase.

Besides Caoilte and Ossian, the pre-eminent heroes, after Finn himself, of the earliest texts, we hear of Oscar falling at Gabbra, Oscar whose later fame excels that of any other hero. Goll too, the hard-smiting chief of the Clanna Morna, and Fergus, the poet of the warrior band, are mentioned, as is also another sister's son of Finn, Diarmaid hua Duibne. A tenth century commentator upon an obscure poem of the previous century, has preserved a verse which justifies the conclusion that the famous story of Diarmaid's elopement with Grainne, the wife of Finn, is as old as any portion of the cycle. The commen-

tator quotes the verse as follows: "As Granne daughter of Cormac, said to Find—

"There lives a man
On whom I would love to gaze long,
For whom I would give the whole world,
O Son of Mary! though a privation!"

The allusion is undoubtedly to Grainne's love for Diarmaid. In the Fenian as in the Arthurian legend the passion of the chief hero's wife for his nephew forms an original and essential element. Here let me note that if the single verse, preserved by a lucky chance, be a fair specimen of the poem ascribed to Grainne and certainly not later than the end of the tenth century, it must have expressed the passion of love with a keen intensity unknown in any contemporary vernacular European literature.

### (*b*) Mediæval Ossianic Romance.

I have briefly sketched the Ossianic literature preserved in the earliest Irish MSS. and undoubtedly older than the twelfth century. The whole may, as I have said, fill some hundred pages of modern print. It can only be a small portion of what was current at the time in Gaeldom; bits and scraps are all that is vouchsafed to us, scarce anything pretending to the name of a saga, a

rounded sequence of incidents. Yet something of the kind must have existed or we cannot explain the presence of the Ossianic texts in the early MSS. For these, compiled as they were for kings and great chiefs, are libraries, containing everything in the way of history, sacred and profane, legend, national and foreign, and didactic teaching with which it was thought essential for a great man to be acquainted. The compilers reflected the literary and scholastic fashion of their day. The admission of the texts I have cited proves the existence of a body of Ossianic romance which must by the eleventh century have won some recognition from the bardic class; the small space accorded to it in comparison with that assigned to the other cycles of mythic and heroic saga, notably to the Ulster cycle of Conchobor and Cuchulinn, proves that it was far less fashionable than they. Turn now to MSS. compiled after the twelfth century and we note a great change. The proportion of Ossianic texts increases steadily from century to century until at last more than sixty per cent. of native Irish fiction is Ossianic or pseudo-Ossianic. We can, I think, explain this fact as due to historic causes of a perfectly definite nature, the consideration of which sheds a deal of light upon Irish literature at large. From the fourth down to the end of the tenth century the head kingship of Ireland had remained almost

exclusively in the North Irish tribe of the Hy Neill, the descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages. Pre-eminence was thus secured for the Northern traditions whether historical or mythical; the great heroic cycle of Ireland was that which commemorates the deeds of the Ulster chieftain Conchobor, of the Ulster braves Cuchulinn and Conall Cearnach. These traditions, these sagas, reflecting as they do the recitations of countless generations of storytellers and minstrels who had been accustomed to find the chief market for their wares among the dominant northern chieftains, make up the bulk of the great vellum MSS. which give us a fairly faithful idea of Irish literature up to the eleventh century. But at the beginning of that century a Munster chieftain, Brian of the Dalg Cais, wrested the head kingship of Ireland from the Hy Neill. The leading poets of the eleventh century were attached to the court of Brian and his descendants; a number of important historical and legal works emanated from Munster. Is it too bold an hypothesis that Brian's success gave to the Ossianic saga, which belongs essentially to the south of Ireland, a share in the pre-eminence which had previously been enjoyed by the northern heroic traditions? The Fenian tales existed long before the time of Brian, but they were not fashionable, they did not attract the attention of the chief bards and storytellers. Munster's head kingship gave

them a status and importance which they had previously lacked.

This hypothesis explains much. As the Ossianic legends only came largely into the hands of the bardic and story-telling class centuries after the alleged date of their personages, they necessarily lack the firmer and more precise historic note which characterises the Ulster cycle, connected as that was from its very inception with a definite historical tradition. The action of the one cycle, the Northern, takes place on earth, many as may be its links with the land of gods and demons; the action of the other really takes place in fairyland, associated though be its incidents with hills and caves and woodlands familiar to both storyteller and audience. There was a centuries old historic convention restraining and directing the one; the other, lacking such a convention, was at the mercy of the individual storyteller.

Another peculiarity of the later Ossianic literature — the standing antagonism between the Fenian warriors and the *Lochlannach*—is perhaps largely due to the assumed emergence of the saga under Brian and his successors. For Brian, the victor of Clontarf struck down in the moment of crowning victory, was essentially a champion of the Gael against the Gall or foreigner. What more natural than that his deeds and those of his warrior son, Murachaidh, should colour the south

Irish saga once it came into the hands of the court bards or reciters? Certain it is that both father and son figure frequently in the later Ossianic romances and in folk-tales connected therewith, thus testifying to the fact that their substance goes back to a time when the valiant deeds of Dalcassian princes were still fresh in the memory of the Irish race.

Be this as it may, and whether the explanation which I have essayed be accepted or not, it remains true that in the post twelfth century Irish literature the Ossianic cycle occupies an almost predominant position. The oldest text of the secondary or mediæval stage of the cycle is also the longest and in many ways the most important of all, the so-called Agallamh na Senorach, or Colloquy of the Elders. I know nothing in any literature that at all resembles it. Formally, it is a chaos of local legends connected only by the fact that all are put into the mouth of Caoilte, the last survivor of the Fenian band, and are related by him either to Patrick or to various chieftains with whom he takes up his quarters. It thus follows the model of the pre-mediæval topographical poem put in Finn's mouth, in which the mention of each place calls up its appropriate story. Like so many Irish texts the Colloquy is a mixture of prose and verse. The protoganist, as already stated, is Caoilte; Ossian is, indeed, mentioned as being, save Caoilte,

the sole survivor of the band, but he goes to stay with his fairy mother in the elfin mound of *Ucht Cleitigh*, whilst his comrade perambulates the length and breadth of Erin and expounds to his wondering and eager hearers the heroic lore of the past. Among these hearers none is more eager or more naively and intently interested than Patrick. From the time that he and his clerics meet the tall men with their huge wolf dogs, and wonder greatly as they gaze upon them, "for the largest man among them reached but the waist or else to the shoulder, and they sitting," of the Fenian warriors, the saint's curiosity is unwearied and persisting. True he has some scruples at first. "Were it not for us an impairing of the devout life, an occasion of neglecting prayer, and of deserting converse with God, we, as we talked with thee, would feel the time pass quickly, warrior." But his two guardian angels come to reassure him, and "with equal emphasis and concordantly" urge that the ancient warriors' tales be written "on tabular staffs of poets and in minstrels' language, so that it be a pastime for the nobles of the latter time to give ear to them." The devout saint pays due heed to this message from heaven, and the close of each incident recalled to Caoilte's memory by the sight of some hill or grave mound is marked by his approval: "Success and benediction, Caoilte, all this is a recreation of spirit and mind to us. And where is Brogan

the scribe? ' Nor does his satisfaction stop short here. In the course of their wandering, Fian and saint come to the grave of a warrior who had died of shame because he could not on the spot fittingly reward a poet who had panegyrised him. "Heaven and his release from torment be from me to him in recompense of his sense of honour," is Patrick's comment, and "in that very hour his soul came out of pain and sat on Patrick in the form of a white dove." Nay, he grants Heaven to a minstrel of the fairy clan who delights him with his music; "but for a twang of the fairy spell that infests it nothing could more nearly resemble Heaven's harmony," is his remark to his scribe, and the latter's answer deserves record, "if music there be in Heaven, why should there not on earth, wherefore it is not right to banish away minstrelsy." That Caoilte should receive Heaven as the reward of his storytelling need not surprise, but indeed he is as devout and curious of the saint's teaching as the saint is gracious and curious of his pagan lore; the relations between the two are full of an exquisite and courteous cordiality. One feels that for the storyteller to whom we owe the *Colloquy*, the glories of old time Erin were dear, but not dearer than the Heaven which by grace of Mary's son and Patrick's intercession he himself hoped one day to win.

There is no unity in the *Colloquy*, no connecting

link save the personality of the narrator. Close upon a hundred legends are given in full or in brief, the latter as a rule. The allusions are often so curt and remote as to be unintelligible to us nowadays. Here, we feel, is a vast mass of legend, all more or less familiar to the story-teller's hearers, summed up in terse form. In its extant form the *Colloquy*, of which the MSS. belong to the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, is in the main, I think, a compilation of the late thirteenth century; if this is so, the story-tellers of the previous hundred and fifty years must indeed have been busy with the Ossianic heroes, for scarce a page of the *Colloquy* but presupposes romances which must at one time have existed in a more lengthened form.

The subject-matter of the Ossianic episodes which make up the *Colloquy* is various. We find instances of the theme of an oversea princess fleeing from an abhorred husband or suitor to seek protection with those patterns of chivalry and valour, Finn and his champions; we have raids, oversea, by Fenian warriors in search of brides or treasure. But by far a larger number of stories involve the relations between the Fenian and the fairy clan, the Tuatha de Danann. These are pictured as akin to mortals in form and stature, though gifted with more than mortal beauty and grace; liable to violent death, but immune from disease and old age; brave, but less brave and warlike than the human

warriors whose aid they eagerly seek in the conflicts they wage among themselves; endowed with such superhuman powers as invisibility and shape-shifting, and, in especial, preeminent in magic and wizardry. Thanks to these powers they frequently take the upper hand at first, but in the long run fortune remains with the Fenian warriors, and hard though be the straits in which they often find themselves they invariably emerge with enhanced fame and the repute of unconquerable prowess. The fairy maidens are often fain of the mortal heroes; nor do the chieftains of Faery disdain to seek brides among mortal maidens. Matter is thus yielded for a number of love tales, mostly tragic in their issue, but related with a gentle pathos, lacking all ring of true passion, which is characteristic of the *Colloquy*. Akin to this is the general tone of soft melancholy which pervades ths romance—it is full of lament for the days that are no more, but the lament is neither bitter nor piercing; it recognises the inexorable and weeps over it, but neither rails nor curses.

Sensitiveness to natural impressions and delight in the chase are characteristic of the *Colloquy*, as, indeed, they are of Ossianic romance in every stage of its development. Whereas the fighting pieces strike the reader as perfunctory and conventional, all that relates to woodcraft and woodland life is treated with a deep-felt joyousness. Nature, especially in

her sterner moods, is keenly observed, as witness the following lay on winter—

"Cold the winter and the wind is risen; the high-couraged, unquelled stag is on foot. Bitter cold to-night is the whole mountain, yet for all that the ungovernable stag is belling. The deer of Slievecarn of the gatherings lays not his side to the ground; no less than he, the stag of frigid Echtge's summit catches the chorus of the wolves. I, Caoilte, with brown Dermot and with keen light-footed Oscar, we, too, in the nipping night's waning end would listen to the music of the pack."

But the minstrel has as keen an eye for the softer aspects of nature—

"O well of the strand of the two women, lovely thy luminous branching cresses; from thy banks thy trouts are to be seen, thy wild swine in the wilderness hard by, thy fair hunting-cragland, thy deer, thy dappled and red-chested fawns . . . lovely the colour of thy purling stream, O thou that art azure-hued and green as the surrounding copsewood is mirrored in thee."

### (*c*) Post-mediæval Ossianic Romance.

Startling is the contrast as we turn from the *Colloquy* to the next great division of Ossianic romance, the Ballad section of the post-mediæval texts. It is as if we left a cathedral close, grace-

fully monotonous in its uniform hues of grey and green, touched with the high-bred air of a spot remote from earthly passion and strife, and ventured forth into a wild and rocky moorland where man, living close to Nature at her sternest, becomes stern and fierce as the tempest he dares, or the wolf he pursues. The differences concern the form and subject-matter as well as the tone and spirit of the texts. Whereas the *Colloquy* is in prose interspersed with verse, the narratives we now have to consider are almost wholly in verse. Caoilte is no longer the witness *par excellence* to the departed glories of the Fenian prince, Ossian has almost completely ousted him. Many of the personages, scenes, and incidents recorded in the *Colloquy* are absent from the ballads, in which again we find much for which the *Colloquy* affords no clue. Of infinitely greater importance is the change of tone and spirit. Caoilte and Patrick are, we have seen, friends who love and respect each other, each conscious of his worth and delighting to honour the other; the warrior accepts devoutly the teaching of the saint, and the saint rejoices to fling wide open the gates of heaven. Ossian, in the ballads, is a pagan, defiant and reckless, full of contempt and scorn for the howling clerics and their churlish low-bred deity. The Patrick with whom he has to do well deserves this scorn. The benignant and gracious gentleman of the *Colloquy*, keenly appreciative of

the great-hearted generosity of the Fenian chiefs, is replaced by a sour and stupid fanatic, harping with wearisome monotony on the damnation of Finn and all his comrades; a hard taskmaster to the poor old blind giant, to whom he grudges food, and upon whom he plays shabby tricks in order to terrify him into acceptance of Christianity. To milder arguments indeed Ossian is deaf; when Patrick vaunts his God as maker of field and grass and all creation the warrior answers scornfully—

'Twas not in forming fields or grass
That my King took delight;
But in mangling the bodies of heroes,
In contesting kingdoms and spreading his fame.

He cannot believe that aught could ever have resisted his father and comrades—

O Patrick, 'twas not in the time of the Fians
That that man God lived;
Certain if he were east or west
The Fians would have stricken off his head.

Or again, in a verse which reaches the high-water mark of his indomitable and confident pagan ism—

Were my son Oscar and God
Hand to hand on the hill of the Fians,
If I saw my son down,
I'd say that God was a strong man.

Akin to this spirit of harsh and scornful defiance is

the bitter resentment displayed by the pagan warrior as his memory recalls the days of his youth. He is old and feeble and blind, the delights of the chase and of love are denied him; these things are hard to bear, but the causes of his resentment lie deeper. He cannot away with the new world of which the Christian cleric is the symbol and the embodiment; he loathes the ascetic, churlish ideal unworthy a warrior and a gentleman, and he contrasts it with the delights that were once his, with the joy of a life wholly simple and unsophiscated, finding perfect satisfaction in battle, woodcraft and dalliance. He never wavers in his loyalty to the past; if his comrades are in hell, he is content to be there likewise. 'Would God,' he asks, 'admit his dog to Heaven's court?' And he cannot understand the Saint's indignant protest—were *he* but acquainted with God he would surely reconcile Him with the hound.

The earliest examples we have of these later Ossianic ballads are contained in a MS. compiled by James Macgregor, Dean of Lismore in Perthshire, some time before the year 1518. The Dean, a lover of song and tale, jotted down all that took his fancy, poems ascribed to the heroes of the cycle, poems formally assigned to bards of his own or a slightly earlier time, some complete, some fragmentary, some a mere jumble of heterogeneous scraps. The note I have characterised in the preceding

pages is firmly struck in several of the Ossianic poems in the Dean's collection. If we put aside this Scotch-Gaelic MS., which represents a tradition as old as the fifteenth century at the latest, we must come down to the seventeenth century before we find either in Scotland or Ireland MSS. containing this species of ballad. But throughout the eighteenth century and in Ireland, at least, down to the middle of this century, such MSS. abound, and numberless episodes of the cycle are worked up in the form of a dialogue between Ossian and Patrick in which the railing lament of the aged warrior is a standing feature.

The literary problem disclosed by these facts has scarce been noted, still less has any serious attempt at its solution been essayed. Is the pagan, anti-clerical note of Ossianic literature younger in fact, as it is undoubtedly younger in record, than the harmony of Christian hagiology and native saga revealed in the *Colloquy of the Elders?* Did a change come over the feeling of Gaeldom at some time during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, originating a new conception and presentment of the relation between Saint and Pagan hero? Did this change of feeling originate in Scotch Gaeldom and did it work back to Ireland? Is it possibly due to a larger admixture of Norse blood in Scotch Gaeldom? Or is the mood, only fully revealed in the latest MSS. and in living tradition, the primitive

and genuine one, and is the harmonising process noticeable in the *Colloquy of the Elders* the work of an original artist who transformed current tradition to suit the needs of an imagination at once devout and patriotic? If this latter view be accepted may not the emergence of the older Pagan spirit in the later romances be due to the fact that, under the increasing competition of Classic, French and English literature from the fifteenth century onwards, the native literature fell more into the hands of the folk and thus reverted to the archaic stage from which it had started?

I am content to ask afresh these questions which no one has asked before me, and shall not essay any answer. I will merely say that whilst I concede the possibility of the anti-clerical Pagan spirit of Ossianic legend being a creation of the last four centuries, I deem it extremely improbable.

I have laid special emphasis on this one point both because it concerns the dominant feature of post-mediæval Ossianic romance, and because of its bearing upon the intellectual and moral history of the Gael alike in Ireland and in Scotland; but it must not be supposed that the note of protest and defiance, although the most characteristic, is the sole one of the later literature, and that this consists, formally, of nothing save wrangles between Patrick and Ossian. The older tradition

which made Caoilte the representative of the Fenian band has not entirely disappeared from the later texts, nor, where Ossian has taken Caoilte's place, is the former always pictured as in bitter enmity with St. Patrick. Moreover, besides the dramatic narrative poems, in which the dialogue framework is of as much moment as the episode which it enshrines, many narrative poems exist which lack the framework altogether, or in which it is mere conventional ornament; there also exists a great mass of prose narratives which dispense entirely with what may be styled the "survivor" machinery, and relate episodes of the cycle in a style and tone which differ greatly from those of the poems.

These later prose romances may be roughly divided into two main classes: the first wearing a more historic aspect, selecting its themes chiefly from the relations of Finn to professed contemporaries mentioned in the annals, elaborating an account of the organisation of the Fenian band, and, as a rule, serious in intent and effect, though frequently fantastic in presentment and bombastic in style; the second humorous, almost grotesque, in choice of incident and mode of narration, or else conceived in a vein of avowed and deliberate romanticism. In this second class coincidences of incident and situation with the later stage of Arthurian romance occur not infrequently,

coincidences so marked as to render improbable their attribution to chance or to essential kinship between the two bodies of literature, and to warrant the conclusion that the Franco-English romance of chivalry found its way to Ireland in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and exercised some influence upon the later Ossianic tales, an influence, be it noted, secondary and accidental rather than primary and essential. Irish mythic romance reveals no trace of such deep and far-reaching modification as befell, for instance, the French *chansons de geste* after their contact with the *Matière de Bretagne*, the Arthur romances.

The humorous and grotesque stories of the second class present most affinity with the prose narratives preserved orally to this day in Ireland and Scotland; and the comparison between the MS. version, two or three centuries old, and the living folk-tale, is often of extreme interest. As a rule the folk versions are wilder, ruggeder, more fantastic than those found in MSS. of the last three centuries. It may happen, too, that the tale picked up but a few years ago has a mode of depicting the material conditions of the saga, and a method of characterisation which *look* (I do not say which *are*) more archaic than those of the MS. versions. Some scholars have urged that the tales found in MSS. of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries are inventions of the story-tellers of the

day, and that in percolating through to the folk they put off much of the finery with which the professional story-teller had adorned them, and put on a homely, barbaric garb. To my mind the reverse process is a more likely one: the folk were at all times full of stories about Finn and his braves, stories which, lacking either pseudo-history or highly developed literary form, were taken up by the professional narrators and ultimately transcribed in the fashion of the time. This I believe was the usual course, though the other may have been, and in some cases certainly was, taken. For story-teller and audience were separated by no such gulf as divides the modern man of letters from the vast mass of the reading public. The same body of tradition was common to both, and the differences in handling, though numerous, were unessential.

Down to the middle of last century the Ossianic cycle retained its sway over the native literary class; the tales were continually being re-worked over and remodelled, and a certain amount of fresh invention, on the lines and in accord with the spirit of the older legend, took place. Thus the well-known poem of Ossian in Tir na n-Og (the Land of Youth) is undoubtedly the composition of the eighteenth-century poet Michael Comyn. But it would, I believe, be an entire mistake to imagine that he invented the central incident, or even a large amount of the subsidiary detail; he took a

traditional theme and narrated it in the traditional spirit, in perfect because unconscious accord with all the conventions of the literature to which he was adding a monument. He probably knew the countryside versions, he was certainly familiar with what poets of the previous centuries had composed, and, himself the last of a long line of folk-singers, he produced a work which, his in its wording, is yet traditional and popular in substance and form.

The points in which Ossianic literature of the last four centuries, whether in prose or verse, whether collected from the lips of the folk or recorded in the MS. of the professional narrator, differs from the mediæval and pre-mediæval literature are trifling and insignificant compared with the essential similarities of matter and treatment. Development there has been, variation, also it may occasionally be decadence, but it still remains the same body of heroic-mythic romance, the outlines of which are clearly apparent in the twelfth-century vellums. Due stress has already been laid upon the permanence of the note of lament and protest. The theme of Fenian relation to oversea invaders, whether it assume the shape of defence against raids, of harrying expeditions to distant lands, of succour to distressed foreign damsels, or of abduction of outland brides, is constant and manifold in its variety; it forms the staple of the

lengthiest prose narrative of the cycle (saving the *Colloquy*), the *Battle of Ventry*, in which Finn's *rôle* as the representative defender of Gaeldom against the foreigner culminates. Equally prominent is the theme of the Magic Hunt, in the course of which the heroes fall into the power of the wizard and fairy clan, whence they invariably escape with increase of fame. The story of Grainne's love for Diarmaid maintained its sway and found expression both in prose and verse. Scattered episodes have come down to us in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century MSS., but, as a whole, we only know it in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century versions, the very popularity of which probably tended to the disappearance of the earlier forms. The atmosphere of somewhat unreal romance is preserved to the last. Were it not for the ever-insistent delight in the wild life of woodland and mountain, we should seem to move wholly in a company of mists and phantoms. The breath of open-air life, the joy in nature, sweeten and quicken what would otherwise be too frequently tedious and inane.

It would be vain, as may be gathered from the foregoing characterisation of this literature as a whole, to seek from it a realistic representation of the life of a given period, least of all of the period in which its heroes are alleged to have lived. Its oldest texts cannot be used as evidence to pre-

Christian modes of life in Ireland as can the Ulster hero legends. Where precision of statement exists—as, for instance, in the elaborate account of the way in which the Fenian bands were organised and recruited, and of the rights and privileges they enjoyed—it is, I believe, wholly unreliable, the figment of a later age. It has been urged with much ingenuity that this account preserves the memory of primitive contact between Ireland and Romanised Britain, and that the military system it discloses was modelled at second or third hand upon the Roman legion. I can only avow my scepticism. The essential characteristics of Fenian organisation as pictured in the romances, are independence alike of the High King and of the Provincial Kings, and wardenship of the coasts against oversea attacks. Had any knowledge of the Roman military system penetrated to third-century Ireland it might have been used by some ambitious chief for the purpose of subjugating his neighbours; it could not have originated the idea of a national system of defence, which presupposes lasting and repeated attacks affecting the whole nation. Nothing of the kind is known in third-century Ireland. In the ninth century the state of affairs was different: hardly a district of Ireland but was affected by the Norse incursions. It is conceivable that under these circumstances some form of organised militia should spring up, independent of the tribal system, and

placing its services at the disposal of any tribal chief who was especially menaced and whose ordinary resources were insufficient to meet the menace. But the account of the Fian band can hardly be taken seriously even if we suppose it to apply to facts and events of the ninth instead of the third century. It is too obviously a fancy picture, traced by some bard whose vision of the distant past was undisturbed by much real knowledge. It is none the less of extreme interest as embodying an ideal of patriotic chivalry which may be as old as the twelfth century, but probably took shape in the following century. The individual Fian must be at once an expert athlete and warrior and a poet versed in the twelve books of poetry; he must practise generosity largely, denying meat and valuables to none; he must hold his ground against any number of opponents less than nine. Collectively, the body stood outside the strict tribal rules which governed the rest of Irishmen: "if their guarantee was violated they must not accept material compensation in satisfaction." As a rule, if any Irishman was injured his tribe was bound to exact material compensation, the extent and nature of which were rigidly determined. As satisfaction was generally denied, private grievances became tribal feuds, and tribal enmities which prevented any effectual combination against the foreign invader were perpetuated. Some loosening of tribal

ties may well have taken place in the ninth-century warrior bands, the prototype of the Fenian militia described in the mediæval texts, and in so far there may be an historical basis for the mediæval account.

In other respects there is scarce a trace in the Ossianic stories of the sharply bitten, highly elaborate description of the material life and circumstances of the chieftain-warrior class which makes the texts of the Ulster cycle of such inestimable value to the student of the past. The descriptions of Finn's household and retainers which, it is true, have been preserved, lack the realistic precision of the earlier cycle. But the very feeling that continually besets the reader of this literature, the feeling that the story-teller is projecting himself back into a golden age which he knows to be unreal, enhances its value as an expression of the ideals which haunted the mind of the bardic story-tellers and their audience of chiefs and warriors. Courage, magnanimity, boundless generosity—these, the last especially, are the proper attributes of the heroes—

> Were but the brown leaf which the wood sheds from it gold,
> Were but the white billow silver,
> Finn would have given it all away!

is Caoilte's proud vaunt of his dead lord. Indeed, so perpetual is the insistence upon the virtue of open-handedness as to warrant the surmise that the story-teller class no longer possessed

the assured standing of earlier times, and was compelled to stimulate the liberality of its patrons. As the hero is a free giver, so also he must have a free mind, hating what is false and crooked and mean:

> We the Fians never told a lie,
> Falsehood was never known to them;
> 'Twas by truth and the might of our arms
> We 'scaped unhurt from each conflict.

And again:

> Patrick, 'twas not the wont of the Fians
> Not to give choice of the fight to their foes;
> Treachery they cherished not, nor malice,
> Not such was the repute of their tribe.

Perhaps the finest picture of the warrior chief as conceived by the idealising fancy of mediæval Gaeldom is to be found in the two panegyrics upon Finn and Goll preserved by the Dean of Lismore:

> Both poet and chief,
> Braver than kings,
> Firm chief of the Fian.
> . . . .
> Foremost always,
> Generous, just,
> Despising a lie.
> Of vigorous deeds,
> First in song.
> A righteous judge,
> Firm in rule.
> . . . .

Marble his skin,
The rose his cheek,
Blue was his eye,
His hair like gold.
All men's trust,
Of noble mind.
Of ready deeds,
To women mild.
. . .
Noblest of kings,
Finn ne'er refused
To any man,
Howe'er unknown.
Ne'er from his house
Sent those who came.

Or again:

A hero brave,
Bold in assault.
His bounty free,
Fierce to destroy.
Beloved of all,
Goll, gentle, brave.
. . .
Skilful and just
He rules his men,
His bounty wide,
A bloody man.
First in the schools,
Of gentle blood
And noble race,
Liberal, kind,
Untired in fight,
No prince so wise.
. . .

Leopard in fight,
Fierce as a hound,
Of women loved.

What, it may be asked, is the literary merit of this body of romance? I have quoted enough, I trust, to show, even in an English dress, the frequent charm and beauty of detail. That it does not as a whole reach a very high level is due to the fact that it is essentially a mass of fairy tales, lacking that firm grip upon the elemental realities and passions possessed by all really great literature. The fairy tale, when it comes straight from the heart of a gifted and unsophisticated race, may often possess a direct and naïve beauty that is irresistible; or again, if it fall into the hands of an artist endowed with the temperament to feel and the skill to render its charm, it may assume a shape of alluring loveliness. Instances of both kinds of beauty occur in Ossianic romance, but, as a whole, when it came into the hand of the literary, the story-telling class in Ireland, that class no longer attracted, if I mistake not, the most gifted minds of the race. Thus no single passage or episode in the Fenian cycle is as representative of native Gaelic artistry at its highest as much that may be cited from the Ulster sagas. Moreover, whilst the story-telling class which elaborated the Ossianic romances possessed conventions of narrative and expression which it diversified with extreme

ingenuity, it did not renew them, deprived as it was of really fertilising contact with other literatures. The result was that the inherent weaknesses of all fairy-tale romance were developed rather than removed, and the greater part of the Ossianic cycle is a literature of decadence in so far as it is rooted in the past and not in the present, and is compelled to derive its sustenance from convention and not from contact with life. Certain characteristics of the language in which the romances are composed further tend to accentuate defects from which romance at its best is never free. Gaelic is a language of extraordinary richness of vocabulary and variety of expression. Handled by generation after generation of literary artists, who sought novelty in ever-fresh elaboration of style rather than in invention of incident or revivification of spirit, it tends to fall at last to the level of the merely ingenious and pretty. All English translators of Ossianic poetry have dwelt upon the difficulty of a faithful rendering which shall avoid monotony and tedium. The same things are apparently being said over and over again. In English, yes; not so in Gaelic, where the wealth of synonym enables the poet to repeat himself with a slight variation. It thus comes to be the artist's aim to find many and varied expressions of an idea rather than to seek the only right one. In realistic literature, contact with life will

often produce adequate expression, even if artistic skill be lacking, but in romance the finest feeling is required for what alone is truly adequate in selection and rendering of incident. The dialogues between Patrick and Ossian contain matter promising in the extreme, but there was lacking an artist capable of conceiving all that the contrast of ascetic Christianity and Pagan joy of life implied, and of seeking until he found the one form of words adequate to the conception.

A word or two must be said upon a point that was fiercely debated between Ireland and Scotland after the publication of Macpherson's poems—the relative share of either section of Gaeldom in the Ossianic legend. The debate was futile because those who carried it on lacked the historical sense. They lost sight of the fact that up to the fifteenth century certainly, and, to a large extent, even during the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth century, Gaeldom, from a literary point of view, was practically one. The Gael of Ireland and Scotland shared equally in a common body of romance. This fact was forgotten by the Irishman and Scotchman of a hundred years ago, who, overlooking the romantic character of the cycle and dwelling solely upon its connection with historic fact, claimed it as a record, however distorted, of the past history of their land. The Irishman had

far more reason on his side, because the historic basis such as it is of the cycle is connected with Gaelic Ireland and not with Gaelic Scotland; he was wrong in not recognising that much of the incident contained in the cycle has just as much claim to be localised in Gaelic Scotland as in Gaelic Ireland, or indeed wherever the Gael might have settled when he was still in the mythopœic stage, because it is no reflection, however distorted, of actual fact, but a translation into the terms of heroic romance of older mythic material common to all Gaels. He was also wrong in not recognising that the Scotch Gael was justified in developing this common body of romance in his own way, and that the specific Scotch Gaelic developments have exercised a marked, and in some cases, I would urge, a beneficial, effect upon the cycle as a whole. The Scotch disputants, on the other hand, put themselves out of court by their denial that Ireland was the land in which took place the historic events of the cycle, and in which it first assumed a literary shape which reacted upon and profoundly modified the popular versions. I have called the dispute futile, but it was not wholly so: in the ardour of debate texts were printed and criticised, and much valuable material was thus brought to light which might otherwise have remained hidden. But at this time of day the old controversy should be allowed to die and Irish and Scotch Gaels should

unite in cherishing the Ossianic romance as a common possession to be cared for and studied with brotherly emulation.

Dr. Hyde has already called attention to the fact that the metrical revolution which transformed Gaelic poetry in the seventeenth and eighteenth century—ultimately sweeping away the intricate system of metrics which had been in force since the tenth century at least—seems to have originated in Scotch Gaeldom. I have hinted at the possibility that the tone and spirit of the later Ossianic ballads may be a specific Scotch Gaelic creation. I would dwell for one moment upon one characteristic feature of Ossianic romance, its fondness for certain aspects of nature, as that also seems to me connected with Scotland. When the late Mr. Black celebrated with unwearied iteration the beauty of the Western Isles of Scotland, he was, all unknown to himself, taking up a tradition that had been potent among the Gaelic minstrels for over a thousand years. The gem of mediæval Gaelic nature poetry, indeed of all nature poetry written in any European vernacular for over a thousand years, is Deirdre's farewell to Alba in the *Woe of the Sons of Usnech*. The following from the *Colloquy* has not the poignant charm of that exquisite lament, but it gives a vivid impression of the joyous woodland outdoor life in which the Fenian heroes delighted—

Arran of the many stags, the sea impinges upon her shoulders!

An isle in which whole companies were fed, and with crags among which blue spears are reddened.

Skittish deer are on her pinnacles, soft blackberries on her waving heather; cool water there is in her rivers and mast upon her russet oaks.

Greyhounds there were in her and beagles; blackberries and sloes of the dark blackthorn; dwellings with their backs set close against her woods, while the deer fed scattered by her oaken thickets!

A crimson crop grew on her rocks, in all her glades a faultless grass. Over her crags, affording friendly refuge, leaping went on, and fawns were skipping!

Smooth were her level spots, fat her wild swine, cheerful her fields . . . her mast hung on the boughs of her forest hazels, and there was sailing of long galleys past her.

Right pleasant their condition all when fair weather sets in! Under her river banks trouts lie; the seagulls whirling round the grand cliff answer one the other. At every fitting time delectable is Arran!

It may well be that minute and loving descriptions such as these are due to men sprung from the isles and glens they picture so fondly.

It is hard in so few pages to give an adequate amount of a literature which has lived for so many centuries, and which still lives in the heart and memory of many thousand Gaelic-speaking peasants. The note of permanence, of continuity, is indeed the crowning wonder of Ossianic romance, and may well be emphasised afresh by way of conclusion to this

brief study. If an English minstrel from the court of Canute or the Confessor revisited the world he would—granting the initial difficulty of language were overcome—find scarce a hundred living men who could follow his recitation with any measure of understanding. To the most learned of scholars much would be entirely obscure, much only partially followed; to the vast mass of educated Englishmen his songs and stories would be meaningless, crowded with personages, incidents, and themes wholly unfamiliar. A French minstrel of the same period would stand a better chance; from the Universities of France, Germany, and Italy might be drawn an audience fairly familiar with the subject-matter of his lays, whilst the man of average education would at least have a bowing acquaintance with Charlemagne and his Peers. But if a contemporary of Brian Boru were to appear in many districts of Ireland or the Highlands, and tell his tales of Finn and the Fians, subject-matter, mode of narration, methods of description and characterisation—all would appeal familiarly to his audience of peasants ignorant for the most part of reading or writing. Story-tellers and hearers alike would praise the generosity and wisdom of Finn, celebrate the fleetness of Caoilte, the irresistible beauty of Diarmaid, the rude prowess of Goll; alike they would mourn the untimely fate of Oscar, bravest of the brave. The tales of Finn's birth and upbringing, of

Ossian's fairy parentage, of Grainne's tragic love, would find hearers as appreciative, as familiar with every detail as when the minstrel recited them at the court of the Dalacassian princes. Here and there narrator and hearers would find differences; each would note the appearance of unfamiliar heroes and adventures; the narrator might be found old-fashioned, or he, again, might condemn the modern versions as diffuse and tasteless. But these points of difference would be unimportant, and scarce affect the startling conclusion that well-nigh the same stories as were told of Finn and his warrior braves by the Gael of the eleventh century, are told in well-nigh the same way by his descendant of to-day.

# CHRONOLOGICAL APPENDIX

SECOND AND THIRD CENTURY, A.D.—Period of the Fenian warriors.

According to the Irish Annals Cumhal, Finn's father was uncle to Conn the Hundred fighter, high king of Ireland, whose death is recorded by the Four Masters in 157 A.D. Art, father of Finn's father-in-law, Cormac, was slain in the Battle of Magh Mucruimhe, recorded by the Four Masters in 195 A.D.; the first year of Cormac's reign is placed by them in 227 A.D., his death in 266 A.D. They record Finn's death in 283 A.D., following the eleventh century annalist, Tighernach. But Tighernach's contemporary, Gilla Caemhain, makes Finn die fifty-seven years after Magh Mucruimhe, which, if his date for that battle be the same as Tighernach's, a fact that cannot now be ascertained, would place it in 252 A.D. Tighernach, followed by Four Masters, ascribes the Battle of Gabhra to the year 284 A.D. He mentions Cairbre's death, but makes his slayer Seniach, son of Fer Cirb of the Fothairt. Cormac, Cairbre and Finn are the only personages of the saga mentioned by Tighernach, who represents the strict historical point of view; his silence concerning other personages and incidents of the cycle warrants the conclusion that he looked upon them as belonging to romance rather than to history, but does not justify doubt concerning the existence of the romances in his day; he was equally reticent as regards the Ulster cycle, with the monuments of which he must of course have been perfectly familiar.

FIFTH CENTURY.—Apostolate of Patrick, whose death is recorded by the Four Masters in 493 A.D.

EIGHTH CENTURY.—The tales about Mongan-Finn, preserved in the Book of the Dun Cow, possibly belong to the latter part of the century. They seem to antedate any trace of Norse influence and to be very little later than the Voyage of Bran, which is almost certainly a composition of the early eighth century at the latest.

NINTH CENTURY.—The Norse invasions, which began at the close of the eighth century, and continued throughout the ninth century, profoundly affected the Ossianic cycle as a whole. Indeed, Professor H. Zimmer has gone so far as to deny altogether the alleged third century historic basis of the cycle and to assert that the historical Finn was the ninth century chief of a mercenary band—half Norse, half Irish. I have given a full summary of his argument in the Introduction to Campbell's *Fians*. It will suffice here to say that, whilst Professor Zimmer's insistence upon the important Norse element in the Ossianic tales is fully recognised, his theory as to the personages of the cycle has entirely failed of acceptance.

EARLY TENTH CENTURY.—Cormac, the King Bishop of Cashel, was slain in 908. A glossary of words and expressions, obsolete in his day, has come down to us containing many very important quotations from works now lost. Whilst it is doubtful if the glossary is actually to be attributed to him, it is almost certain that it is only a little younger in date. The oldest portion of the glossary contains references to and stories about Finn.

The *Amra Choluimb Chille*, the Elegy upon Columba traditionally ascribed to Dallan Forgall, the sixth and seventh century bard, is, according to Professor J. Strachan (*Revue Celtique*, xvii., 41 *et seq.*), a composition of the early ninth century. The glosses upon this poem preserved in the Book of the Dun Cow are probably a century younger. These glosses have preserved the verse of a poem celebrating Grainne's love for Diarmaid. See *supra*, p. 14, and *infra*, p. 55. The *Amra* has just been

edited and translated by Dr. Whitley Stokes in the *Revue Celtique*, vol. xx. (1899). For the first time this remarkable monument of early Irish scholastic literature has been made really accessible to the student, not the least among the many invaluable services which Dr. Stokes has rendered to Irish studies.

LATE TENTH AND EARLY ELEVENTH CENTURIES.—Rise to power of the Munster chieftain Brian of the Dalg Cais, slain in 1014 at Clontarf. Throughout the eleventh century the Dalcassian princes and their bards and learned men are prominent. All the stories about Finn found in the Book of the Dun Cow *must* have been compiled before 1050, and probably represent a mass of written tradition already one hundred to one hundred and fifty years old.

LATE ELEVENTH CENTURY.—The Book of the Dun Cow was copied from earlier MSS., before 1106, when its scribe was slain. Professor H. Zimmer has argued with great plausibility that it is a transcript of MSS. collected and revised by Flann of Monasterboice, who died in 1054 with the reputation of being the most learned man of his day.

EARLY TWELFTH CENTURY.—The last Norse invasion of Ireland took place under Magnus Barelegs (so nicknamed by his Norse subjects from his fondness for the Irish dress), slain in 1103. This invasion has left its trace in the Ossianic post-mediæval ballad of Manus, and is, apparently, the last historic event which has affected the cycle.

MID-TWELFTH CENTURY.—The Book of Leinster was compiled in the years preceding 1160. It is largely made up of transcripts from much earlier MSS., but it also contains poems by almost contemporary writers.

THIRTEENTH CENTURY.—Probable date of redaction of the *Colloquy of the Elders* preserved in MSS. of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It should be noted,

however, that whilst the *Colloquy* is full of traces of Norse influence, it is, apparently, altogether free from any traces of the Norman invasion.

LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.—Latest possible date for the Ballad literature in semi-dramatic form vouched for by the Book of the Dean of Lismore, compiled in the years preceding 1518.

EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.—The Dhuanaire Finn, the oldest existing Irish-Gaelic MS. of Ossianic post-mediæval ballads, was copied in 1627 from earlier MSS., the transcript being made for a Captain Sorley MacDonell of the great Antrim family. The publication of this MS. which will, it is hoped, be undertaken before long, by Mr. John Mac Neill for the Irish Texts Society, will throw a flood of light upon the later development of the cycle. As far as I can judge from a list of contents which Mr. MacNeill has kindly sent me, the contents of this MS. are essentially of the same nature as the Ossianic portions of the Book of the Dean of Lismore.

MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.—Composition of the poem Oisin in Tir na n-Og, by Michael Comyn, probably the last deliberate bit of creation or rearrangement of the legendary substance of the cycle.

About the same time James Macpherson was composing his Ossian in Scotland. But whereas Comyn remains perfectly faithful to the traditional subject matter and mode of presentment, Macpherson disregards the latter entirely and the former very largely.

# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

*I first cite the chief works in which Ossianic literature may be found printed, and to which constant reference will be made in the following pages. I then go through the study, page by page, and append notes upon any points likely to be of use to the student.*

*Miss Brooke.*—Reliques of Irish Poetry, &c., Dublin, 1789.

Contents: Conloch and Cucullan. Magnus the Great. The Chase. Moira Borb. War Ode to Osgur. Ode to Gaul, &c. (the remaining contents are non Ossianic). The texts edited and translated by Miss Brooke belong to the post-mediæval section of Ossianic literature.

*Oss. Soc.*—Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the years 1853-58, 6 vols., Dublin, 1854-1861.

Contents: Vol. I.—The Battle of Gabhra. Vol. II.—The Festivities at the House of Conan of Ceann-Sleibhe. Vol. III.—The Pursuit after Diarmaid O'Duibhne and Grainne, edited by Standish Hayes O'Grady. How Cormac mac Airt got his Branch. The Lamentation of Oisin after the Fenians. Vol. IV.—Fenian Poems edited by John O'Daly: the Dialogue between Oisin and Patrick: Battle of Cnoc an Air. The Lay of Meargach. The wife of Meargach. The Chase of Loch Lein. The Lay of Oisin on the Land of Youth (Comyn's poem edited by Bryan O'Looney). The Boyish Exploits of Finn (fifteenth-century text edited by J. O'Donovan). Vol. V.—The Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institution, edited by O. Connellan (not an Ossianic text). Vol. VI.—Fenian Poems edited by John O'Daly: the Chase of Sliabh Guilleann. The Chase of Sliabh Fuaid. The Chase of

Gleann an Smoil. The Praise of Beinn Eadair. The Hunt of Sliabh Truim. The Chase of Sliabh na-m-Ban. The Chase of the Enchanted Pigs of Aenghus an Brogha. The Hunt on the Borders of Lough Derg. The Adventures of the Amadan Mor.

*Simpson.*—Poems of Oisin, Bard of Erin, &c., by J. H. Simpson, London, 1857.

Contents: Deardra. Conloch. Dialogue between Oisin and St. Patrick (with summaries of the same Poems as in Oss. Soc. IV.). Oisin comes from the Youthful City. Conversion of Oisin. Fionn goes to Graffee. Fionn goes to Loughlin. Enchantment of the Giants in Ceash. Oisin born of a doe. Death of Erraran son of Fionn. A Grecian Princess comes to Erin. The Battle of Ventry Harbour.

A valuable collection made in Munster and South Connaught.

*Lismore.*—The Dean of Lismore's Book, &c., edited by the Rev. Th. McLauchlan. Edinburgh, 1861.

Contains twenty-eight Ossianic pieces.

*Leabhar na Feinne.*—Heroic Gaelic Ballads collected in Scotland chiefly from 1512 to 1871, arranged by J. F. Campbell. London, 1871.

Prints the Ossianic portions of the Book of the Dean of Lismore, the Dunstaffnage MS. (1603), the Ardchonail M.S. (1670), and the collections of Pope, MacNicol, Jerome Stone, Fletcher, MacDiarmaid, Kennedy, Gillies, Irvine, Turner, MacCallum, and smaller collections of the eighteenth century as well as Campbell's own collections. The Gaelic text alone is given, but Kennedy's English summaries are printed.

*Silva Gadelica.*—A collection of Tales in Irish, edited and translated by Standish Hayes O'Grady. London, 1892.

Contains the following Ossianic pieces: X.—The Panegyric of Cormac and the Death of Finn, son of Cumhall,

XI. — Enumeration of Finn's Household. XII. — The Colloquy of the Ancients (my quotations in the foregoing pages are made from this fine version). XVII.—Pursuit and Flight of the Gilla Decair. XIX.—The Carle in the Drab Coat. XXI.—The Enchanted Cave of Ceshcorran. XXVI.—The little Brawl at Almhain.

Mr. O'Grady's translation of the Colloquy is made from the Book of Lismore (an Irish fifteenth-century MS. not to be confounded with the Scotch Book of the Dean of Lismore), which is imperfect in many places. Dr. Whitley-Stokes has printed the missing portions from the Oxford MS. in Irische Texte, vol. iv. part i.

*Campbell. Fians.*—Stories, Poems and Traditions of Fionn and his Warrior Band, collected from oral sources by J. G. Campbell. London, 1891.

Forms Vol. IV. of Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition. Mr. Campbell, Minister of Tiree, must not be confounded with J. F. Campbell, of Islay, the collector of the West Highland Popular Tales.

Mr. Campbell's Fians, collected in Tiree within the last thirty years, affords wonderful proof of the vitality of the Ossianic cycle among the Gaelic speaking peasantry. In the bibliographical notes to the volume, I have given the concordance of the versions with the older Irish sources as far as known, and with the versions contained in the Leabhar na Feinne. These notes thus form a rough index to the larger part of the cycle.

*Revue Celtique.*—Vols. I–XX. Paris, 1870--1899.

The following Ossianic pieces are contained in this admirable periodical, which first under the editorship of Mons. Henri Gaidoz, then under that of Mons. D'Arbois de Jubainville, has rendered more services to the study of Celtic antiquity than any other publication of its kind.

I.—Fionn's Enchantment (J. F. Campbell). II.—The Battle of Cnucha (from the Book of the Dun Cow, W. M. Hennessy). V.—Macgnimartha Find (Kuno Meyer).

VII.—Finn and the Phantoms (from the Book of Leinster, Whitley Stokes). XI.—Uath Beinne Etair (from Harl. 5280, K. Meyer). XIII.—L. C. Stern, Le MS. irlandais de Leide (a fifteenth-century MS. which contains some interesting Ossianic texts, which are given in the original and in a French translation). Oscar au fléau (Douglas Hyde). The Battle of Mag Mucrime (Whitley Stokes). XIV.—Two tales about Finn (from the thirteenth-century MS. Stowe 992, Kuno Meyer).

*Ventry.*—Cath Finntrága, or the Battle of Ventry, edited from MS. Rawl. B. 487, by Kuno Meyer. Oxford, 1885.

Edited from the same fifteenth-century MS. which contains the oldest text of the *Colloquy*, after which this is the longest of all the Fenian Romances. The editor's Introductions are of great interest and value.

## NOTES

PAGE 1. *Macpherson.*

The latest general work on Macpherson is Mr. J. B. Saunders' *Life and Letters of James Macpherson*, 1895. Mr. Saunders has no real appreciation of the points at issue in the Ossianic controversy and is much too favourable to Macpherson. The best brief summary of the debate with which I am acquainted is contained in Mr. A. Macbain's articles, Macpherson's Ossian, *Celtic Magazine*, Feb.–April, 1887. The *Report of the Highland Committee*, 3 vols., 1805, is still worth consulting.

PAGE 5. *The Battle of Gabhra.*

The oldest text relating to this battle, a poem of seven quatrains, placed in Ossian's mouth preserved in the Book of Leinster, has been edited and translated by E. O'Curry, *Oss. Soc.*, i. pp. 49–57.

PAGES 7–9. *The Pre-Mediæval Ossianic Romance.*

I have collected all the references accessible at the time, (1890) in my Essay on the development of the Fenian or Ossianic saga: *Waifs and Strays*, vol. ii. *Cf.* pp. 402–408.

The tales about Mongan-Finn are edited and translated by Prof. Kuno Meyer, *Voyage of Bran*, vol. i. pp. 42 *et seq.*

The poem *Finn and the Phantoms* is translated and edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, vol. vii. pp. 289 *et seq.* A later text is contained in the early seventeenth century Franciscan Dhuanaire Finn. A Highland folk-tale which presents the most marked analogies to the early poem has been edited and translated by Campbell of Islay, *Revue Celtique*, vol. i. pp. 193 *et seq.*

PAGE 9. *Finn's Poem on Winter.*

I have translated Professor Zimmer's German version (*Kelt. Beiträge*, III.) correcting by Dr. Whitley Stokes' version in his edition of the *Amra Ch. Chille.*

PAGE 10. *The Cairn Incident.*

This is found in one of the most archaic of Irish heroic legends: The Destruction of Daderga's fort, which relates how Conaire Mor, high-king of Ireland, was surprised and slain by piratical raiders. Before starting to attack the fort they pile up a cairn.

PAGE 13. *Diarmaid and Grainne.*

The great story list in the Book of Leinster (printed in O'Curry's MS. Materials, pp. 583–593) has preserved the title of a story, *Aithed Grainne re Diarmait*, the main outlines of which were almost certainly the same as in the extant version. The Book of Leinster story list is

undoubtedly as old as the early eleventh, and may be as old as the early eighth, century. The tale in its present form, is edited and translated by Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady (*Oss. Soc.*, vol. iii.) from eighteenth-century MSS. What is apparently a fragment of an earlier recension has been edited and translated by Professor Kuno Meyer (Uath Beinne Etair) from a fifteenth-century MS. Harl. 5280, *Revue Celt.*, vol. xi.

In addition to the verse quoted on p. 14 the commentary to the *Amra Ch. Chille* contains another fragment, two lines of a speech addressed by Diarmaid to Grainne, vaunting the woodland fare he can offer her. See Dr. Stokes' translation, *Revue Celt.*, vol. xx.

In the Arthurian romance the story of Guinevere's love for Lancelot, which is at least as old as the year 1160, has probably replaced a much older and ruder version. Guinevere's infidelity is alluded to by Geoffrey of Monmouth.

An interesting feature of the Diarmaid-Grainne story is its association with the rude stone monuments. All over Ireland cromlechs are found known as Diarmaid and Grainne's beds. This has been held to denote an archaic strain in the story.

PAGE 16. *The Dalcassian Princes and their Court.*

Among the works which almost certainly were composed in Munster may be mentioned the history of the struggles between the Irish and Norsemen: *The Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, edited and translated by Todd, 1862. It is also probable that the extant recension of the Book of Rights is of Munster origin. The chief poet of the Dalcassian court was Mac Liag, who died in 1015.

Brian and Murachaidh (Murrogh) appear as folk-tale heroes very early. In ch. xcviii. of the *Wars of the Gaedhil* a dialogue is recorded between Dunlang O'Hartugan

and Murachaidh in which the latter speaks of the allurements held out to him in "elf-mounds and fairy mansions." Although this chapter is, as Todd says (p. clxxviii. 5), an evident interpolation in the eleventh-century work, it must nevertheless be at least as old as the fourteenth century, as it is found in Todd's MS. D. which he assigns to that century. The scene of the famous folk-tale, the Leeching of Cian's Leg, is placed at Brian's Court. The earliest known recension is edited and translated, *Silva Gadelica* (No. xx.), from a fifteenth century MS. The oral versions (Cf. *Waifs and Strays*, vol. ii., pp. 208 *et seq.*) are much fuller, and, I believe, represent an earlier stage of the tale than the fifteenth-century MS.

PAGE 17. *The Norsemen in the Ossianic Stories.*

Professor Rhys contends (*Hibbert Lectures*, p. 355) that the Norsemen (Lochlannach) have taken the place of earlier mythical adversaries of Finn, and that "Lochlann, like the Welsh Llychlyn, before it came to mean the home of the Norsemen, denoted a mysterious country in the lochs and seas."

PAGE 20. *Grave-Opening.*

A common *motif* in the *Colloquy* is the opening of a Fenian warrior's grave and the rifling of its treasures. Eight such instances occur in the Book of Lismore version. I cannot help connecting this feature with the well-known grave-rifling practices of the Norse invaders.

PAGE 21. *The Tuatha de Danann.*

For a full discussion of the nature and attributes of this mysterious race I would refer to my *Voyage of Bran*, in particular to chapters xvii. and xviii.

PAGE 22. *The Woodland Note in the Ossianic Romances.*

This note is absent from the tales of the Ulster heroic cycles, excepting the *Woe of the Sons of Usnech*, which in this, as in other respects, shows affinity with the Fenian cycle. It should also be noted that it is prominent in the Arthurian cycle, especially in romances connected with Tristan and Gawain. Until the Ossianic romances have been studied much more carefully it would be premature to found any argument of date upon this characteristic. It *may* denote that the stories belong to a very archaic stage as it *may* also be simply a trait which the Ossianic shares in common with other branches of mediæval literature.

PAGE 24. *The Lament for Past Days.*

As I have pointed out in my Introduction to Campbell's *Fians*, this note, characteristic of one of the great cycles of Gaelic romance, can be paralleled in Brythonic (Welsh) romance. There exist in Welsh a number of poems, attributed to the sixth-century Llywarch Hen, which picture him as the last survivor of the heroic struggle against the invading Saxons, lamenting his youthful prowess and joy of life. Whilst these poems cannot be, as once was thought, the composition of the sixth century chieftain, they are at least as old as the twelfth century. The tone of Llywarch Hen, like that of the Ballad Ossian, is bitter and resentful.

PAGES 24–25. *The Ballad Ossian.*

Quite adequate acquaintance with this section of post-mediæval Ossianic literature can be obtained from (*a.* as regards Scotland) the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, Ian Campbell's *Popular Tales*, and *Leabhar na Feinne*, and J. G. Campbell's *Fians*; (*b.* as regards Ireland) from the

Ossianic Society publications, and from Simpson. I may refer again to my bibliographical notes to Campbell's *Fians* as supplying a summary index to the chief themes and episodes.

I should note that I use the term *ballad* in default of a short term of a more precise nature. The Ossianic narrative poems are not *ballads* in the sense we apply to the word, and the genuine ballad is almost unknown in Gaelic literature.

PAGE 29. *Pseudo-Historic Stories in the Later Ossianic Literature.*

The numerous late versions of the tale found in the Book of the Dun Cow, The Cause of the Battle of Cnucha, and the tract known as Finn's Boyish Exploits, may be cited as representative specimens.

PAGE 29. *Romantic and Humorous Prose Stories in the Later Ossianic Literature.*

Examples may be found in *Silva Gadelica* (No. xvii. The Flight and Pursuit of the Gilla Decair; No. xix. The Carle of the Drab Coat; No. xxi. The Enchanted Cave of Keshcorran), and Joyce, *Old Celtic Romances* (The Fairy Palace of the Quicken Trees; The Pursuit of the Gilla Dacker). The romantic type is represented by the Battle of Ventry.

PAGE 30. *Ossianic Folk-Tales.*

Numerous examples may be found (*a.* for Scotland) in Campbell of Islay's *Popular Tales*, in MacInnes' *Folk and Hero Tales* (Waifs and Strays, vol. ii.), in MacDougall's *Folk- and Hero-Tales* (Waifs and Strays, vol. iii.), and in Campbell's *Fians;* (*b.* for Ireland) in Larminie's *West Irish Folk-Tales*, 1894, 6*s.*; in Curtin's *Hero-Tales of*

*Ireland* (1895, 8*s.* 6*d.*), and *Myths and Folk-Lore of Ireland* (1890, 9*s.*).

The question of the relations between the Irish MS. and the oral folk-versions has been discussed by myself in the introductions and notes to the various volumes of *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition*, more especially in the Introduction to vol. ii. MacDougall's *Folk- and Hero-Tales*, and by Dr. Hyde and myself in the Introduction to the former's *Beside the Fire*.

PAGE 35. *The Qualifications of a Fenian Warrior.*

The earliest extant text is that edited and translated *Silva Gadelica* (No. x.) from a fifteenth century MS. As Dr. Hyde notes it is couched in a vein of true Celtic hyperbole (*Lit. Hist. of Ireland*, p. 373). It is much as if we found a series of rules for an All England Eleven, admission to which was made conditional upon the applicant's scoring 1000 runs per innings, and bowling the opposite eleven with consecutive balls.

PAGE 43. *Scotch Origin of the Metrical Revolution.*

*Cf.* Dr. Hyde's *Literary History of Ireland*, ch. xxxix. Dr. Hyde finds the earliest trace of the new system in the poems of Mary, daughter of Alaster Rua MacLeod, born in 1569.

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I may fittingly close with a few words of advice to students who wish to advance the interpretation of the Ossianic legends by original work. Very much remains to be done before we can form a clear idea of their origin, nature, and development, and even without a knowledge of Gaelic, much assistance may be rendered by any one willing to take a little trouble. Thus, a careful comparison of the subject-matter of the cycle as presented in the *Colloquy* and in the later recorded *ballads*, cannot fail to

throw much light upon the problems involved, as would also comparison of the specific Scotch and Irish forms of the *ballads*. But, of course, such comparisons are likely to be far more fruitful if made by Gaelic students. The majority of the Ossianic texts have come down to us in a form differing but slightly from the spoken language, whether in Ireland or Scotland; they are thus accessible to any one who knows the spoken language. At the same time these texts are, to a very large extent, remodellings of much earlier ones, they preserve many archaic words and constructions, and traces of early metrics, and thus afford an excellent bridge to the study of the mediæval literature. Moreover, they offer by far the best means of following the differentiation of Irish-Scotch Gaelic which has taken place within the last four centuries.

A number of interesting points offer themselves for investigation: the *dramatis personæ* of the cycle, their names, attributes, body of incidents with which they are specially connected; the *locale* of the cycle, the way in which it has been adapted to various districts of Gaeldom; the historic basis of the cycle, the way in which it has affected or been affected by the traditional romantic element; the specific relation of the Irish and Scotch versions; the specific relation of the prose and poetic versions and the determination of their respective ages by linguistic tests; the metrical system of the poems and its relation to mediæval Irish metrics; the presence of dialectic traits in the texts, &c.

It is only by detailed investigations such as these that the foundations can be laid for a real history of Irish romantic literature. I sincerely trust the foregoing pages will not only induce a certain number of students, whether Gael or Cymry or English, to take up the work of investigation for themselves, but will also be found of some assistance to them, at all events at first.

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# KING ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS:

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF ARTHURIAN LITERATURE

KING ARTHUR and his knights! Was there ever a time when to English ears these words were not an "open sesame" to the gates of a Fairy-land, the more charming in that we believed it to be partly, at least, real? Even in the stern Puritan days when romance was a thing to be abhorred of the "saints" Milton could have dreams of devoting an epic to the glory of the British hero. (We wonder what the poet of the *Paradise Lost* would have made of that fascinating and tangled web of Celtic-French fact and fancy!) And yet how little, how very little, we know about them. Let any of us take any twelve of our friends, of those whom we know to be above the average in intelligence and culture, and ask them one by one, what they can tell us of King Arthur, and how we can gain information as to his life and doings, and what shall we be told? Certainly we should be referred to Malory and Tennyson—and there for

ten out of the twelve the matter would end. Perhaps, only perhaps, the other two might be able to tell us that there was a history by a certain Geoffrey of Monmouth, out of which a certain Walter Map drew materials to invent the legend of Arthur and the Grail, and it might be, that if exceptionally well informed, our last friend might contradict this statement and say, "No, it was not Map who invented the Grail story at all, but a French poet, called Chrétien."

And, indeed, if we get as much information as that, we shall be fortunate! It is no exaggeration to say the few names just mentioned represent all that is known, and that at second or third hand, by even highly educated people, of this great body of literature. A few years ago a *History of English Poetry* was published, and received with acclamation, in which the writer practically attributed the whole body of Arthurian Romance, so far as he considered it worthy of notice, to Walter Map. Only the other day, in one of our leading journals, there appeared a long article from the pen of a popular writer, who poses as a person of exceptional culture and literary discernment, wherein Wagner's *Parsifal* was severely criticised as a "wide departure from Malory!" So much do even our would-be teachers know of the matter.

There are certainly reasons which might be urged in excuse for this widespread ignorance of a legend

which we have every right to claim as national; the greater portion of Arthurian literature is in a foreign tongue, and it is only in comparatively recent years that a systematic attempt has been made to arrive at a clear idea of the date, authorship, and mutual relation of the romances composing the cycle. For long even professed scholars were content with the most meagre, confused, and superficial knowledge on a subject which touches us so nearly.

But have we any right to look on King Arthur as a national hero? It has been objected that since Arthur was a *British* chieftain we are entirely wrong in treating him as an *English* hero. This is surely a pedantic accuracy which over-shoots its own mark; we might as reasonably contend that the French have no right to glory in the *Matière de France*, since Charlemagne was certainly no Frenchman! The truth appears to be that absolute racial identity between hero and hero-worshippers is a factor of minor importance in the case of peoples, who, like the English and the French, are compounded of various racial elements. What *is* essential to a national hero is that he shall have successfully maintained the honour of the *land*. Arthur represented the honour of Britain, Charlemagne that of "*la douce France*," the feeling which glorified both was patriotism in the most exact and accurate sense of the word.

The evolution of Arthur as a national hero, indeed, is a very curious and striking example of the unconquerable vitality and power of impressing itself characteristic of the Celtic genius. We reject, and very reasonably, the tradition which represents the British King as carrying his arms triumphantly through France and Italy, and vanquishing even the power of Rome; but what the *historical* Arthur did not do, the *legendary* Arthur assuredly achieved. Not only did the English people (representative of the Saxon, Danish, and Norman invaders of British soil) take him to their heart, and as they became welded into one folk accept him as the traditionary embodiment of the spirit of their land, but he took captive the imagination alike of France and of Italy. He is immortalised in French verse and in Italian architecture; Sicily claims to be his resting-place; and there is no European literature of any importance which does not contribute its quota to the great mass of Arthurian romance.

Yet a comparatively small proportion only of this literature is in the English tongue. When the Arthurian legend was at the height of its popularity the dominant language was French, and it was in the form of French romance that the *literary* legend became popularised in this land.

Nevertheless it is, I believe, a mistaken view which ascribes this popularity entirely to court

influence, and the charm of Chrétien's verse: the legend had not been entirely forgotten in its own land, and re-introduced from without; nor is there any reason to suppose, as some scholars have done, that the knowledge of it was confined exclusively to the survivors of the original inhabitants of the Island. Too much has, I think, been made of the racial animosity existing between Briton and Saxon. We know for instance, that for a period extending over two centuries at least the two nationalities lived side by side in the city of Exeter. Even to-day archæologists will point out where the line of demarcation between the two towns (for such they practically were) ran, nor were the Britons treated as a subjugated folk. William of Malmesbury distinctly says that they enjoyed equal rights with the English. This state of matters lasted well into the tenth century; are we to believe that during all these years the memory of bye-gone strife was kept alive to such an extent that Saxon and Briton never came into friendly contact with each other, held no inter-communion, never inter-married, never made common cause against their common foe the Danes? They ask a great deal who ask us to believe this! Evidence points the other way; in Cornwall, the refuge of the surviving British population we find to-day families bearing a name of such purely *Saxon* origin as Eddy (Æddi) and yet claiming to be of pure

Cornish descent; in East Anglia, a Saxon stronghold, we find in the seventh century the British name of Cadwallon.* Surely it is more reasonable to suppose that by the transmission of oral legend the name and fame of the British chief had become thoroughly familiar to the Saxon population long before the "literary" stage of evolution had been reached.

Every folk must have its national hero, and it is worthy of note that the Saxon or Teutonic heroic legends never took real root in this land. That they were introduced we know. Have we not the poem of *Beowulf?* But Beowulf and his fight with Grendel and the dragon, were less popular than the record of how Arthur slew the giant of Mont S. Michel, and conquered the Demon Cat. The great *Sieqfried* legend certainly came to these shores, and we find traces of its influence in Celtic romance; † but the only Teutonic hero who seems to have gained firm footing on English ground was *Wieland*, who as *Wayland Smith* still survives in popular tradition.

* On this point see an interesting article by M. Ferd. Lot in "Romania," No. 109, January 1899. For information regarding the British and Saxon names, &c., I am indebted to the Rev. Canon Edmonds, Librarian of Exeter Cathedral.

† *Cf.* Mr. Alfred Nutt's study on the *Mabinogi of Branwen*, "Folk-Lore Record," Vol. V.

Whatever the reasons may have been, the fact remains that as the various nationalities in this island slowly welded themselves into one people, and Briton, Saxon, Dane and Norman became *English*, the hero adopted as their national hero was the chief of the conquered, not of the conquering races. Thus when Geoffrey of Monmouth, drawing upon a work probably compiled by a continental Breton, gave to the world his "*Historia Britonum*" in which the pseudo-historical deeds of Arthur were solemnly related, the book was received with avidity, and Norman and Angevin Kings, without a drop of British blood in their veins, gloried in the renown of their predecessor. His history was bound up with the history of Great Britain, and the inhabitants of that land, recognising this, hailed him as their own.

But, as I said before, in its literary form the Arthurian legend came to us mainly in a foreign tongue. With the scanty materials at our disposal it is difficult to say what was the date, and what the extent, of the original Welsh Arthurian literature. At one time it probably formed a considerable body of romance, but by the twelfth century, from which period the real popularity of the Arthurian legend may be dated, Welsh was, as its very name indicates, an unknown tongue alike to the English-speaking majority of the nation and to the Norman conquerors, and as such had no power of competing

with French, the language of the court and the nobility. The survival of the legend as a living force, both here and on the continent, was doubtless due to Celtic influence; its immense popularity as a Romantic literary cycle was due to French genius.

Thus the main body of Arthurian literature is French, some of the finest poems are German, little, very little is English. Previous to Malory English Arthurian literature consisted of scattered ballads and metrical romances, and these, save for scholars, are practically unreadable. If any student desires to get a clear idea of the slow growth of the English language, and the time it took for the various elements composing it to be welded into a national tongue, I can suggest nothing more illuminating than for him to take three Arthurian romances, say a poem of Chrétien de Troyes with its contemporary German translation, and our *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knyghte* (the best of our English Arthurian romances) and compare them. If he has any real knowledge of French and German he will not find the two first over-difficult; there are, of course, obsolete words and obsolete forms of spelling, but read them aloud, and they are quite intelligible. At the close of the twelfth century France and Germany had, each of them, a language and a literature. But the English poem, two centuries later in date and nearer our day than the others, is practically in "an

unknown tongue," so little relation does it bear to the modern form of our language. To read it at all is a task which demands great patience—and an excellent glossary!

Previous to the compilation of Sir Thomas Malory, which is almost entirely a translation and abridgment of the later French prose romances, we have no English Arthurian literature accessible, or intelligible, to the general reader.

This naturally accounts, in a large measure, for the ignorance of the Arthurian legend common in England; it has also unhappily affected the work of those scholars who have seriously set themselves to study the subject. The *legend* certainly belongs to us, but the *literature* belongs elsewhere, and this fact was at first not sufficiently recognised. Comparatively speaking it is only in our own day that the value of romantic literature has been realised, and its study systematically attempted; for long such subjects were deemed unworthy the attention of a serious scholar. A lifetime might be spent over the elucidation of some obscure Greek or Latin writer (who had, perhaps, left only half a poem behind him), but to attempt to understand the tales in which our forefathers had delighted, on which the childhood of the nation had been fed, was quite beneath the dignity of a learned man. We know better now; we know that if we would understand a folk we must study its tales,

and that important evidence of the inter-relation of peoples, the spread of culture from one land to another, the influence of one race on another, is to be gathered from their popular literature. The study of romance means also the study of history, and in the subject we are now considering any student of Arthurian literature will readily admit that historical considerations play no unimportant part.

At first interest in the question naturally shewed itself in printing and making accessible to the public the principal texts. To such writers as Southey, who edited the *Morte d'Arthur;* Ritson, who published several volumes of *Ancient English Metrical Romances;* Dunlop, who wrote a *History of Fiction*, and Sir Frederick Madden, who published a selection of poems dealing with *Sir Gawain*, we owe a debt of gratitude none the less deep because the progress of study has necessitated most of their work being done over again.

Early labourers in this field contented themselves with the reproduction of a MS. Interesting as the work was they hardly held it of sufficient importance to undertake the labour involved in reconstructing the original text by means of careful and critical comparison of all the available MSS. Nor were the materials for such a task at their disposal to the same extent as they are at ours. Much, very much, still remains to be done, but

every year facilitates the task; new editions of the various romances are published; critical editions, already in our hands, revised and improved; here and there a search-light is thrown on some special point of interest by means of studies and monographs from the pen of scholars of known repute. But in all this labour it is regretfully to be acknowledged that we, in this land, still lag behind. Of late years the study of romance literature in general and of the Arthurian cycle in particular has made immense strides on the Continent, but any one interested in the matter cannot fail to be struck by the paucity of English works of solid value as compared with the mass of French and German critical literature. To a monograph on the Grail legend, published by a German scholar last year, was appended a list of books dealing with the Arthurian legend; out of two hundred and thirty-six works noted, only *fifteen* bore English names, and of those fifteen not more than seven, at the outside, would be of any solid value for critical purposes.

In a brief study like this it would, of course, be impossible fully to discuss this great body of romance, or to give more than such a sketch of its general character as may serve to guide the reading of any one desirous to make acquaintance, at first hand, with the works of which it is composed. As we shall see, these works are not only many in number

but also very diverse in character. We class under the general title of *the Arthurian cycle* a large body of literature, dating for the most part from the latter half of the twelfth and first quarter of the thirteenth centuries, some of which deals only indirectly with the British King. Indeed we are accustomed to include under this heading certain romances, such as the early *Tristan* poems, which have absolutely no connection whatever with Arthur. The fame of the hero-king caused him to become a convenient centre round which to group a circle of recitals of miscellaneous character. Arthur's Court and Arthur's Round Table, had they ever existed in the form familiar to us, would certainly have drawn to themselves, as to a point of attraction, the most valiant spirits of the land and time; from a literary point of view they operated in precisely the same way—the legend drew to itself and absorbed, more or less completely, other legends, some of older, many of clearly independent origin.

This literature divides itself naturally into two sections, poetry and prose. Which of the two was the earlier has been a much debated question; the view now generally accepted is that the poetical romances preceded the prose. M. Gaston Paris very happily demonstrated this in a study on Chrétien de Troyes' *Chevalier de la Charette*, showing that the poetical version had been transferred,

almost literally, to the prose *Lancelot.* It does not, of course, follow that a prose romance was *never* versified; for instance, there exists a mediæval Dutch verse rendering of the *Queste,* the only such version known; here, scholars are unanimously of opinion that the prose contained in all the other MSS. represents the original form.

As a rule the poems, especially the earlier ones, such as the works of Chrétien de Troyes and his German contemporaries, are much more simple and straightforward than the prose versions. There is only one hero, or at most two as in the *Perceval* poems, and the main interest of the story is kept clear, and not confused by side issues. Later on more characters are introduced: we follow the fortunes now of one knight now of another; their adventures (generally with a strong family likeness to each other) cross and recross; the titular hero disappears, often for several consecutive sections of the romance, till in the tangle the reader becomes doubtful as to which knight the compiler designed specially to honour. This tendency to diffuseness is a special characteristic of the prose romances in their later and extended form.

Another characteristic of the two sections is that in the earlier, the poetical versions, the rôle assigned to Arthur is of comparatively small importance. As M. Gaston Paris has pointed out, his court is

simply the point of arrival and departure for the knights in quest of adventures, little or none of the action takes place there. In the later, or prose, romances, on the contrary, Arthur plays a much more important part, much of the action passes at the court, and the loves of Lancelot and Guinevere become the central point of interest.

It must not be concluded from the above remarks that the romances, even the prose versons, are as a rule wearisome to read; on the contrary they are charmingly written. The style is simple, direct, and marked by a certain graceful humour which is very attractive. I incline myself to the opinion that the later Grail romances, the *Grand S. Graal* and the *Queste*, with their love of far-fetched allegory, pronounced tendency to sermonising, and false conception of the relation between the sexes, are decidedly the least interesting. The earlier poets, Chrétien de Troyes, Raoul de Houdenc, Hartmann von Aue, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and Gottfried von Strassburg are each and all delightful, and will well repay study.

Perhaps one might again sub-divide the versions dealing more especially with Arthur into two classes, the historical (or pseudo-historical) and the romantic. That a certain historical basis for his legend exists may be freely admitted; how far it extends is doubtful. *Certainly* he fought against

the Saxons, *perhaps* he was betrayed alike by his wife and by his nephew; we can scarcely look upon anything further in his story as based upon fact.

The adventures ascribed to the king are not, as a rule, of a purely chivalric character. He is a valiant soldier and successful general; he slays monsters, the Boar *Turch Trwyth*, the Demon Cat of Losanne, the Giant of Mont S. Michel, but he does not, as a rule, rescue maidens, assail magic castles, or ride on the Grail Quest. For adventures of this type we must turn to the stories of the various knights, not to those which deal with the king.

In the following pages I propose to group, under the names of Arthur and his leading knights, the romances dealing more directly with each; by this means we shall succeed in classifying the main body of Arthurian romance. Of course certain romances will not fall under any of these headings, as not all the Arthurian heroes immortalised in prose or verse can boast of being the centre of a cycle; other romances, again, may have to be mentioned more than once, as being of importance for the study of more than one branch of the legend; but I shall endeavour to omit no work of solid literary or critical worth, and in the Bibliography appended will be found full information as to the form in which each is procurable.

To begin with **King Arthur** himself, the his-

torical basis of the whole legend is to be found in Nennius' *Historia Britonum*, compiled towards the end of the eighth century. This furnished materials for the more famous *Historia* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, written about 1136. In both of these we have an account of Arthur's struggle with the Saxon invaders, but the meagre historical element is largely intermingled with fables, *e.g.* the account of the adventures of Brutus, and the founding of the kingdom of Britain. It is to Geoffrey that we owe the introduction to the general public of the picturesque figure of the enchanter *Merlin;* a full and adequate account of the source and development of the *Merlin* legend has not yet been published. The popularity of Geoffrey's "history" was immense; it was translated into French by Wace (who added details not to be found in his source) under the title of *Li Romans de Brut*, and Wace, again, was translated into Anglo-Saxon by Layamon.

Following the same lines, but having no claim to be considered other than pure romance, is the prose *Merlin*. This gives an account of Arthur's predecessors, of his election to the kingdom, his wars with the Saxons, and early reign, carrying on the history to the birth of Lancelot. In this, its latest form, it was evidently intended to be an introduction to the prose *Lancelot*.

The first part of the romance, that dealing more

especially with **Merlin** himself, is the work of Robert de Borron, to whom other romances of the cycle are attributed; we do not know who concluded it. Two forms of the *Merlin* exist: the vulgate or ordinary *Merlin*, of which there are several MSS.; and another ending, known as the *Suite de Merlin*, which is found in one MS. alone, and of which the first four books of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* offer an abridged translation. The "Ordinary" *Merlin* is much superior to the *Suite*, which, though it has some features of especial interest, *e.g.* it is the only authority for the fine story of Balaan and Balaain—is very diffuse and contradictory in its statements, and is, moreover, unfortunately incomplete. Both versions have been edited, and are accessible.

The latter part of Arthur's reign, and his death, are related in the French romance of *Le morte Arthur*, or *La Mort au roi Artus* (this must not be confounded with Malory's compilation, of which it forms only a small part). *Le Morte Arthur* is now generally found incorporated with the prose *Lancelot*. The *Lancelot* as a whole, though dealing more with Arthur's knights than with Arthur himself, yet contains a good deal directly relating to the monarch (*e.g.* his deception by the false Guinevere), and is, as noted above, closely connected with the "*Merlin*" in its latest and most extended form.

An entirely different version of the events of the later part of Arthur's reign is presented by the prose *Perceval li Gallois*. The author of this romance, in common with the author of the German *Diu Krône*, was in possession of a tradition which represented the British king in a very unflattering light, as a slothful, self-indulgent *roi fainéant*.

To sum up, the tradition of which Arthur is the real hero is contained in the chronicles above mentioned, the *Merlin*, and the great compilation known as the prose *Lancelot*.

One of the earliest knights connected with King Arthur is **Sir Gawain**. He was, probably, the centre of an independent, and it may be earlier, cycle of adventures. He is certainly the hero of a larger body of episodic romance than belongs to any other knight (he is the hero of most of our middle English Arthurian literature), and it would be difficult to name any leading work of the cycle in which he does not play a part, generally an important part. At the same time he is not the hero of any long biographical romance such as are dedicated to Lancelot and Tristan.

The most important poems in which Sir Gawain figures are the *Conte del Graal* or *Perceval* of Chrétien de Troyes, and its German counterpart, the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach; a good half of these poems is devoted to Gawain, rather

than to the titular hero, Perceval. He is also the hero of *Diu Krône* by Heinrich von dem Tûrlin—a long, rambling poem with many interesting and archaic features. Here, Gawain is the achiever of the Grail quest, in which Perceval has failed. Gawain also plays an important rôle in the *Chevalier de la Charrette*, and the *Chevalier au Lion*, both by Chrétien de Troyes (though the former was completed by another hand); and under his Welsh name of *Gwalchmei* he is a leading figure in the *Mabinogion*, and in the fragments of Arthurian tradition contained in the *Triads*.

A number of English metrical romances connected with this hero have been collected and printed by Sir Frederick Madden, under the title of *Syr Gawayne*. The chief of these, *Syr Gawayne and the Grene Knyghte*, has more than once been published separately.

In vol. xxx. of *Histoire Littéraire de la France* M. Gaston Paris has given summaries of episodic romances of which Gawain is the hero; some of them have never been printed, some are included in the Dutch verse translation of the *Lancelot* and are found nowhere else. In the earlier stages of the Arthurian legend Gawain is represented as the *beau-idéal* of chivalrous valour and courtesy, and no other knight ever gained so firm a hold on English imagination; in our vernacular metrical romances he is decidedly a more

important figure than even Arthur. He was also the "adventurous hero" *par excellence* of the cycle, and the feats ascribed to him are often of a fantastic, and even purely mythical, character. He is certainly one of the most elusive, and at the same time one of the most picturesque and charming figures of the whole legend.

**Sir Perceval.** Next to Gawain, the most important of the early Arthurian knights is Perceval, but his connection with the king is far less close than is the case with the first-named hero. Gawain is always and everywhere Arthur's nephew; this relationship is once attributed to Perceval (Metrical Romance of *Sir Percyvelle*), once to Lancelot (*Lanzelet*), and once to Caradoc (*Li Conte del Graal*). Save in quite the latest forms of his story, such as the *Queste*, Perceval is but a passing guest at Arthur's Court, only appearing there at long intervals; he is never an *habitué* as is Gawain.

It is generally agreed that the earliest form of his story now extant is that contained in the *Conte del Graal* or *Perceval* of Chrétien, and the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach. The relation between these two poems has been much debated; at one time the German poem was held to be a mere translation from the French, but of late years the opinion has gained ground that the two, though ultimately going back to the same

source, are only indirectly connected with each other. Both are very fine poems; the French is superior in literary style, bnt the German is the more poetical in conception, and richer in human interest and pathos. The Arthurian cycle has no more fascinating figure than that of the lonely boy, brought up in the wilderness by his widowed mother, coming to Arthur's Court, an uncouth, untutored lad, to demand knighthood, and gradually, by the discipline of life, and loyal fulfilment of natural duties, developing into a "very perfect, gentle knight"; *A brave man, but slowly wise.** The later Perceval, the knight of the *Queste* and prose versions, is not a very interesting figure; his virtues are too self-conscious and proselytising; but the early Perceval is so simple, natural, and human, that I find it difficult to believe that his legend has not a basis in fact.

Chrétien's *Perceval* is unfortunately extremely difficult to obtain; but the *Parzival*, either in its original form, in modern German, or in an English translation, is within the reach of all. The fact that Wagner's beautiful drama, *Parsifal*, is based upon this poem has of late years given an additional stimulus to its study.

Perceval is also the hero of a romance by Robert de Borron, which we only possess in a prose form; of the Middle-English metrical romance of *Sir*

* Wolfram von Eschenbach. Parzival. Book I. l. 108.

*Percyvelle of Galles;* and of the prose *Perceval li Gallois.* He is also identical with the hero of the Welsh Mabinogi, *Peredur ap Evrawc.* It is with the legend of the Holy Grail that Perceval is most closely connected. He is, beyond a doubt, the *original* hero of the Quest, though in the later romances, familiar to us by Malory's translation, he plays a rôle secondary to that of Galahad.

Into the question of the Grail romances I do not propose to enter here; they form of themselves an important section of Arthurian literature and will be treated separately, and fully, by a more skilful hand. For information on the legend of Perceval as Grail hero the student should consult Mr. Alfred Nutt's *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, but from whichever point of view he be regarded, whether as representative of a prehistoric Aryan hero, or as achiever of the mystical quest, he is a deeply interesting figure, and the literature connected with him includes some of the most fascinating romances of the cycle.

**Sir Lancelot.** It will, doubtless, be a surprise to readers whose idea of the Arthurian cycle has been founded upon Malory and Tennyson, to learn that this knight, so important a figure in the story as we know it, really plays a very insignificant rôle in Arthurian literature. Apart from the great prose compilation bearing his name (of which the adventures of other knights form no inconsiderable por-

tion), Lancelot has very little literature connected with him. He is the hero of the *Lanzelet* of Ulrich von Zatzikhoven (which appears to contain the earliest version of his story now extant), and of Chrétien de Troyes' *Chevalier de la Charrette*. Chrétien's other poems barely mention his name, in the *Perceval* he is not once referred to, and the only adventure to which the most famous of Arthurian poets alludes is that which he himself relates in the *Charrette* poem. It seems very doubtful whether even this adventure, the rescue of Guinevere from Meleagaunt, did not originally belong to some other knight.

Lancelot plays a rôle in *Diu Krône*, and in a few of the smaller episodic poems, such as *Rigomer* and *Lancelot et le cerf au pied blanc*, though again in this latter case M. Gaston Paris thinks he was not the original hero of the tale, but the literature connected with him is far less varied in character, and far less important in its relation to traditional sources, than that of which either Gawain or Perceval is the hero.

It is to the popularity of Lancelot as the lover of Guinevere that the commanding position occupied by him in later Arthurian romance is due, and in this character he appears first in the *Chevalier de la Charrette*. Whether the story of the loves of Lancelot and Guinevere is thus to be placed to the credit of the French poet; whether it be based on

a previous legend of which some other knight was the hero; or whether it be but a late and poor imitation of the *Tristan* story, authorities are at present divided. Probably the truth lies between the last two theories. I do not myself think the story due either to an invention or a mistake on the part of Chrétien.

However the story arose, the fact remains that the prose Arthurian romance in its present form has been worked over and re-modelled in conformity with this, the central point of interest. The prose *Merlin* has been extended and amplified to serve as introduction to the *Lancelot* proper (a process specially noticeable in the *Suite de Merlin*), and the later Grail romances, such as the *Grand S. Graal* and the *Queste*, if not, as seems most probable, originally composed under the same influence, have been submitted to a similar process and practically incorporated with the Lancelot legend.

As it now exists the prose *Lancelot* is a great rambling romance, practically dividing itself into six sections, of the first three of which, alone, Lancelot is the undisputed hero. Of the remaining three sections, the *Agravain* is quite as much devoted to the deeds of other knights of the Round Table; the *Queste* has Galahad and Perceval for its heroes; and the *Morte d'Arthur*, though ranking Lancelot as the first of Arthur's knights, is con-

cerned more especially with the fortunes of the king. Unfortunately this important romance has not been edited, and is not easily accessible. M. Paulin Paris published an abridged and modernised version of the first three sections in his *Romans de la Table Ronde* (Vols. III., IV., & V.), to which is appended an abstract of the concluding portions. A Dutch verse translation of the last three books exists, and has been edited by M. Jonckbloet. It is of great value, as, judging from the version it gives of the *Queste*, it represents an older MS. than any we now possess; it also includes a number of minor episodic romances, some of which are not known in any other form.

Who was the author of the *Lancelot* is uncertain, for long popular tradition ascribed the whole vast compilation to Walter Map and even to-day uncritical writers are apt to make the assertion, but students of Arthurian literature are now generally agreed that it is extremely doubtful whether Map ever had any hand in the matter at all. Certainly the same author did not compose the *Lancelot* and the *Queste*; the style of the two sections is entirely different, and the characters ascribed to the leading knights contradictory of each other. The *Lancelot* and the *Morte d'Arthur* are more consistent; but even in the earlier part of the romance we know that one entire section, that dealing with the *Charrette* adventure, was really the work of Chrétien de

Troyes, and simply taken over bodily into the prose romance; so that the more reasonable point of view seems to be that which regards the *Lancelot* simply as a compilation drawn from various sources on which at various times many hands have worked, and for which no one writer can be held responsible. It is no more homogeneous than is the *Conte del Graal* in its extended form, and *that* is the work of at least five writers.*

**Sir Tristan.** It is only in the later forms of his story that this hero can be considered as in any way belonging to the circle of Arthur's knights; even then his connection with the court is, like Perceval's, intermittent, not close and continuous as in the case of Gawain and Lancelot. In the best version of the tale Arthur is but referred to as a poetical simile, and Mark is King, not merely of Cornwall, but of England also.

As a consistent and connected story, the *Tristan* legend probably took shape earlier than the Arthurian romances proper. Though it has undergone considerable development, the central *motif*, the love of Tristan for Iseult his uncle's wife, has known no change. There is no moment in the Tristan, as in the Lancelot, legend to which you can point as being anterior to the introduction of the love element.

* For the question of Map's authorship of any romance of the cycle, *cf.* Prof. Birch-Hirschfeld's *Die Sage vom Gral*, Chap. VII.

Whether the Lancelot-Guinevere story be but an imitation of the Tristan-Iseult legend or not, the two love tales have manifestly come into contact with and affected each other, and of the two there can be no reasonable doubt which is at once the older and the finer.

The legend of Tristan was apparently at first enshrined in detached *lais*, which, at some period not to be definitely determined, in the course of the twelfth century were woven into connected poems, probably first by *French* minstrels. These poems only exist in fragments. The most important form parts of a poem by a certain Béroul, and of one by an Anglo-Norman, Thomas of Brittany. Both were rendered into German, and these translations still exist. Béroul's version is preserved in the work of Eilhart von Oberge; Thomas's in that of Gottfried von Strassburg. Chrétien de Troyes wrote a *Tristan* which is lost, but which some scholars incline to think lies at the root of the prose *Tristan*. This latter belongs to the same stage of Arthurian tradition as the *Lancelot*; like it, it is a long rambling composition, differing greatly from the version of the story contained in the poems, and containing, like the *Lancelot*, a *Queste* which differs in many details from the better known *Lancelot* version.

Of all the *Tristan* romances the finest is undoubtedly the poem of Gottfried von Strassburg; from a *literary* point of view it is probably the best

romance of the entire Arthurian cycle, though *ethically* it is inferior to Wolfram's *Parzival*. Indeed the German romances as a whole form a most important and interesting section of this literature; where not direct translations from the French, a French original lies at the root of each, but in every case the German poet has treated his source with so much spirit and independence, and with so deep an insight into human nature, that the works have a character and an interest all their own. Gottfried is certainly, in grace of style, the equal even of the much vaunted Chrétien, while Wolfram is far his superior in depth of thought.

Of the *Tristan* romances the most generally popular appears to have been the prose version. Dr. Sommer remarks that it was printed more often than any other of the cycle, but unfortunately, like the *Lancelot*, it has not, so far, found an editor. Gottfried's poem, on the contrary, has been printed more than once, and can easily be obtained.

From the prose *Tristan* Malory drew largely for his compilation, which indeed represents very fairly the three great prose branches of the cycle, the *Merlin*, the *Lancelot* (including the *Queste*), and the *Tristan*. For the *Morte d'Arthur* proper, Malory seems to have used an English translation, not the French of the *Lancelot* version. Inasmuch as these prose versions represent in each case a later and complicated form of the stories with which they

deal, we must not go to Malory with the idea that he will give us the original story of Arthur and his knights. The style is admirable, and the work must always remain a classic of the English language, but the picture it presents of such heroes as Gawain, Perceval, or Tristan, is very far from doing any one of them justice.

Of other knights whose names are well known, none beyond the four first mentioned possess much literary importance. **Galahad**, for example, only appears in the latest versions of the Grail story, the greater portion of the Arthurian literature knows nothing about him. **Kay**, who is certainly one of the oldest characters of the legend, probably had, at one time, romances directly connected with him. Now we only have fragmentary allusions in Welsh tradition (some of which appear to be of very ancient date) a romance *Gawain and Kay* included in the Dutch *Lancelot*, and certain poems such as *The Avowynge of Arthur* in which he plays a secondary rôle.

An important little group of poems connected with the cycle, is that of which the hero is generally termed *The Fair Unknown;* but who in the majority of instances is Guinglain or Gyngalyn, Gawain's son. These are *Sir Libeaus Desconus* (English), *Le Bel Inconnu* (French), *Wigalois* (German), and *Carduino* (Italian). Malory's seventh Book, for which no direct source has yet been discovered,

probably represents a variant of this group. Inasmuch as these poems are of importance for the study of the Gawain legend, they might perhaps be classed with the literature belonging to that hero.

Of isolated Arthurian poems, we may mention *Sir Launfal*, translated and amplified from the *lai* of that name by Marie de France. Originally the story of Launfal or Lanval had, as we see from the *lai* of *Graalent* (which the English translator also used) nothing to do with Arthur; the King at whose Court the adventure takes place was anonymous, and the theme, as Dr. Schofield has shown, is a very old one. It is a good illustration of the manner in which earlier and independent stories were adapted to the requirements of an age which found its most popular theme in the Arthurian legend.

Other good examples of isolated Arthurian poems are the *Cligés* of Chrétien de Troyes, and the *Méraugis de Portlesguez* of Raoul de Houdenc, but the best of this class are certainly the *Erec* and *Yvain* (*le Chevalier au Lion*) of the first-named poet. Both these works were rendered, and finely rendered, into German by Hartmann von Aue (the *Yvain* being also translated into English under the title of *Yvain and Gawain*), and of both we possess Welsh prose versions. Erec is identical with Geraint, the hero of the Mabinogi of *Geraint ap Erbyn*, while Yvain, or Owain, is

the hero of the *Lady of the Fountain* just as Perceval is, as noted above, identical with *Peredur*.

What is the exact relationship between these three poems of Chrétien and the three corresponding *Mabinogion*, scholars have found it difficult to decide. At one time the view was very generally entertained that, in spite of the marked difference of manner and matter, the Welsh stories were only free translations from the French poems. This was certainly an easy way of settling the question, but there were many who felt that the variance in matters of detail, and the very archaic character of the Welsh tales did not lend themselves easily to such a solution. That the *origin* of the stories is Welsh is very generally admitted. Of late years the opinion has gained ground that the *Mabinogion* really represent the *insular* version as preserved among the Celts of Britain, while Chrétien's poems represent the *Continental* version as told by the Celts of Brittany. This seems the truer solution and the one which accounts the best alike for the points of contact and of divergence. If the emigrants remembered their national tales it seems rather absurd to suppose that their brethren who remained in their own land should have utterly forgotten them. At the same time, in view of the popularity of Chrétien's fine versions (which we know, from the translation of *Yvain*, came to this land), it is, of course, possible

that the final form of the Welsh stories, as we know them, has been affected by French influence.

Be that as it may, the relative part played by Celtic tradition and French genius in the formation and transmission of the Arthurian legend is a subject which will afford matter of debate for many a year to come; whether the question can ever be definitely settled is doubtful. Large as is the body of extant Arthurian literature, it is certain that it only represents a part, probably but a small part, of the original whole. Every romance that we possess postulates a previous version of the tale it tells; in no one instance would any critical scholar with a due care for his reputation venture to assert that we possess "the original story, whole and incorrupt, as it was first told."

It is not easy work to reconstruct a chain of which the primary and most important links are lacking, and those of us who undertake a share in the task must be prepared for many a disappointment. Are not the old tales parables for us? Too often we build a tower four square, and fair to look upon, only to find, like Vortigern, that there is a fatal flaw in the foundation which must needs ruin our structure. Or like the knights themselves, wandering in the enchanted forests, we find a fair-seeming road which leads us only to an impenetrable thicket, so that we must perforce retrace our steps.

But, after all, the fascination of the work itself is its own best reward, and if any one to whom this subject has been so far an unfamiliar one has a desire to try his, or her, luck on enchanted ground, it may be that these few pages will aid them in determining how and where they will begin their labours; it is only fair to warn them that they need never hope to *end* them.

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## CHRONOLOGICAL APPENDIX

*Sixth to Eighth Century.*

Building up of British heroic cycle of Arthur and his Knights. The historic Arthur died in first third of sixth century; heroic poems commemorating the struggle of Britons and German invaders were probably in existence at end of sixth or in first half of seventh century. Nennius' *History of the Britons*, in which the Arthur legend is already developed, both on the heroic and the romantic side, dates from end of eighth century.

*Early Tenth Century.*

Settlement of Normandy and initiation of relation between the Duchies of Normandy and Brittany, which brought the Arthur stories to the knowledge of the Normans not later than the first half of the eleventh century.

*Second Third of Eleventh Century.*

Norman settlements in Sicily and South Italy. Spread of Arthur legend to Italy not later than last quarter of eleventh century.

*Second Half of Eleventh Century.*

Norman conquest of England, in which Bretons take prominent part. Norman contact, partly friendly, partly hostile, with Celtic-speaking population (*a*) in South Wales, (*b*) in Strathclyde, which still retained a Cymric-speaking population.

*Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries.*

Considerable literary activity in Wales. Gruffyd ap Conan returns to North Wales in 1073 after stay in Ireland and holds *eisteddfodau* during his long reign, which lasted till 1137. Rhys ap Tewdur returns in 1077 to South Wales from Brittany, and may have been instrumental in uniting the two strands of Welsh and Breton romance. The *Mabinogion*, properly so-called, probably redacted in the last quarter of the eleventh century. Earlier poems, ascribed to celebrated sixth-century bards, are interpolated, added to and pastiched throughout the twelfth century. The stories of Kilhwch and Olwen, and the Dream of Rhonabwy, the only surviving Welsh Arthurian romances which antedate French influence, belong probably, in the form under which they have come down to us, to the middle of the twelfth century.

*Twelfth Century.*

1136. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, first draft.

About 1145. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Life of Merlin.*

1155. Wace's French translation of Geoffrey's *History.*

About 1150–1165. Marie de France, *Lais.*

About 1150. Beroul's *Tristan.*

About 1170. Thomas' *Tristan*, professedly based on the poem of the Breton Bréri.*

* The *Tristan* dates are only hypothetical; the poems are so fragmentary as to yield no certain criterion of date.

1150–1182. Chrestien de Troies: *Tristan* (lost) about 1150, followed by *Erec*, *Cliges*, the *Chevalier de la Charrette* *Yvain* (between 1164 and 1173), and finally the *Conte du Graal*, written about 1182, and left unfinished by the author.

With regard to the prose Arthurian romances, it is difficult to say anything more definite than that they go back substantially to the last twenty years of the twelfth century, but were continually being interpolated, added to, and reworked over until the middle of the thirteenth century, by which date they assumed the form under which they have come down to us.

*First Quarter of Thirteenth Century.*

Spread of the specific French Arthurian romances into Wales, giving rise to (*a*) new Welsh versions partly adapted from the French, (*b*) close and faithful Welsh translations representing earlier stages of the French romances than any existing MSS. of the latter.

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Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, edited by Lachmann in complete edition of Wolfram's works, 1891, 8*s*.; edited by Bartsch (*Deutsche Classiker des Mittelalters*), 3 vols. 1875-77, 10*s*. 6*d*. This edition possesses full footnotes and glossaries. Several modern German translations have been published; the most accurate is that by Simrock (5th edition, 1863, 10*s*.), which is very close to the text. San Marte's (3rd edition, 2 vols. 1887, 10*s*.) translation is very free, and both Böticher (1893, 3*s*.) and Hertz cut down the "Gawain" portion, the former omitting it altogether. Hertz's notes and appendices are good (2nd edition, 1898, 6*s*. 6*d*.) *Parzival*. Translated into English by Jessie L. Weston, 2 vols. 1894, 15*s*. net (unabridged translation with notes and appendices). This poem is very important for the *Gawain* legend.

*Perceval*, prose romance, printed by Hucher in vol. iii. of his *St. Graal*, 3 vols. 1875-79, about £1 10*s*.

*Perceval li Gallois*, prose romance, printed in vol. i. of Potvin's edition. A Welsh version of this exists and has been translated by Canon R. Williams, the Hengwrt MS., 2 vols. 1876-92, £2 2*s*. Under the title of *The High History of the Holy Graal*, this romance has been trans-

lated by Dr. Sebastian Evans and published in the edition of the "Temple Classics," 2 vols. 1898, 4*s*. Dr. Evans' translation is a fine piece of work, but the inexperienced student should be cautioned against accepting the theory as to the date of the romance advanced in the concluding notes. It is undoubtedly a very late version of the story.

*Syr Percyvelle of Galles* is printed in *The Thornton Romances*, edited by J. G. Halliwell, Camden Society, 1844. The Grail romances are fully analysed and discussed in Mr. Alfred Nutt's *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, out of print, but so far the only *travail d'ensemble* of the Perceval legend.

### Sir Lancelot.

Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, edited by K. A. Hahn. Out of print and very difficult to procure.

*Roman van Lancelot*, edited by Dr. Jonckbloet, 2 vols. 1850, about £1 5*s*. In the Introduction the editor prints the French poem of *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*. This Dutch Lancelot does not include the earlier part of the history, it begins at what M. Paulin Paris calls the *Agravain* section, which he considers formed the *fourth* book of the entire *Lancelot;* but from here it is complete, and also includes translations of several other romances, some of which, such as *Morien*, *La Vengeance de Raguidel*, *Le Chevalier à la Manche*, and *Torec* are of considerable length and importance.

The early part of Lancelot's history is only accessible to general readers in M. Paulin Paris' *Romans de la Table Ronde*, 5 vols. 30*s*. The stories here given are much abridged and rendered into more modern language. A critical edition of the *Lancelot* is very much needed.

The *Chevalier de la Charrette* has just been edited by Dr. W. Förster as vol. iv. of his great edition of Chrétien's works, £1.

*Queste del Saint Graal*, edited by Dr. Furnival, 1864, about £1 5*s*.

SIR TRISTAN.

Eilhart von Oberge, *Tristan*, edited by Grimm, 1844.

Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, edited by Bechstein (*Deutsche Classiker des Mittelalters*), with notes and glossary, 2 vols. 1889, 7*s*.; rendered into modern German by Simrock, new ed., 1875, 9*s*.; *Tristan und Iseult*, prose translation of Gottfried's poem (abridged and modernised) by Jessie L. Weston, 2 vols. 1899, 4*s*. The fragments extant of Thomas of Brittany's *Tristan* were edited by Michel, but the book is out of print. A new edition is being prepared by M. Ernest Muret.

*Le Roman en Prose de Tristan*, critically analysed by E. Löseth, 1892, 15*s*. This gives a summary of the contents of the prose romance, with the principal variants. In default of a modern edition of the *Tristan* this book is most valuable. *Der heutige Stand der Tristan Forschung*, Dr. W. Röttiger, gives a summary of the present state of investigation into this interesting legend.

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Sir Thomas Malory, *La Morte d'Arthur*. The best edition is that by Dr. O. Sommer, 3 vols. 4to, 1889–91 £2 10*s*., which exactly reproduces the original text. Vol. iii. (*Studies on the Sources of Malory*) is of special value to the student of Arthurian romance in general.

*The Avowynge of Arthur*, edited by Robson for the Camden Society (*Three Early English Metrical Romances*), 1842, 4*s*.

MINOR CYCLES.

*Sir Libeaus Desconus.* Several times edited; latest edition by Kaluza, 1890, 10*s.*

Renaut de Beaujeu, *Le Bel Inconnu*, edited by Hippeau. A full summary is given in *Hist. Litt.* xxx.

Wirnt von Gravenburg, *Wigalois*, edited by Pfeiffer, 1847. Out of print.

A. Pucci, *Carduino*, edited by Rajna, 1873.

The above four poems, their relation to each other and to the *Erec* of Chrétien de Troyes, have been fully discussed by Dr. Schofield: *Studies on the Libeaus Desconus.* Harvard Studies, vol. iv. 1895.

*Sir Launfal*, printed by Ritson, *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, 1802.

Marie de France, *Lais*, edited by Warncke, 1885, 10*s.*

Raoul de Houdenc, *Méraugis de Portlesguez*, edited by Friedwangen, 1897, 10*s.*

Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés*, edited by W. Förster, 1889, 4*s.* *Yvain* (*Le Chevalier au Lion*), edited by W. Förster, 1891, 4*s.*; *Erec*, edited by W. Förster, new and corrected edition, 1896, 6*s.*

Hartmann von Aue, *Iwein* (*Deutsche Classiker des Mittelalters*), edited by Bech, 1888, 7*s.*; *Erec* (*Deutsche Classiker des Mittelalters*), 1893, 6*s.*

*Yvain und Gawain*, edited by Schleich, 1887. 6*s.*

*Mabinogion*, edited by Lady Charlotte Guest, 1877, 18*s.*

A comparative study of the relation between the French and English Yvain and the Welsh Mabinogi will be found in the *Modern Quarterly for Language and Literature*, Nos. 2 and 3 (July and November 1898).

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# THE POPULAR POETRY OF THE FINNS

THE popular poetry of the Finns has been discovered mainly during the last seventy years. As early indeed as the beginning of the eighteenth century its existence was known to a few scholars, and the first attempt to collect and edit it was made as long ago as 1733. During the next hundred years the work of research was carried on only by a few solitary enthusiasts, and the results were comparatively trivial until the formation of the Finnish Literary Society in the year 1831.

This celebrated and patriotic association granted, in the very first year of its existence, a travelling scholarship to Dr. Lönnrot, who was thus enabled to carry out the great work of his life by visiting the remote corners of Finland and Russian Karelia, and gathering from the lips of peasants a considerable proportion of the buried treasures of Finnish literature.

Through the enterprise of the same Society the discoveries of Lönnrot and other scholars were published, and their publication at once gave considerable impetus to the growing culture of the Finnish people.

Outside Finland the publications of the Finnish Literary Society could appeal only, generally speaking, to the few persons acquainted with the Finnish language. The *Kalevala*, however, the so-called national epic of the Finns, thanks to a number of unusually good translations, has found its way into most countries, and has met with a hearty welcome from all lovers of poetry. In this country it is known through the excellent translation of Dr. Crawford, Consul-General of the United States at St. Petersburg. But this is almost the only attempt that has yet been made (with the exception of Mr. Abercromby's work, mentioned in the Bibliographical Appendix) to render the traditional literature of the Finns accessible to English readers. We do not possess as yet, however, any Finnish-English or English-Finnish dictionary, so that it is perhaps hardly to be expected that much should be done in this direction.

The national literature of Finland is purely oral and popular, the growth of many minds and many centuries: it is regarded by the Finns as the monumental expression of their national life and

is the basis of their culture. There has grown up, indeed, during the last century another Finnish literature of a more cosmopolitan kind, but with this I have nothing to do here. I am concerned now solely with what may not improperly be called the Finnish classics. But this national literature of Finland is so enormously rich, that I can deal only, even most superficially, with a very small portion of it. I must pass by with a bare word of mention all that part of it which consists of prose, such as the vast collections of proverbs, tales, fables, and riddles, which, however important they may be to the anthropologist, are not so generally interesting and characteristic as the Finnish poetry.

The three most representative collections of the popular poetry of the Finns were made by Lönnrot. They are called the *Loitsurunoja*, the *Kanteletar*, and the *Kalevala*. Before, however, I say anything about these collections separately, it will be well to glance at the general character of Finnish poetry, which is quite original.

Finnish verse is remarkable for its singular rigidity of form. Its structure is as classical in its own way as the Latin elegiac. Many critics have been astonished to find such elaborate grace on the lips of men whom we should call uneducated. "How in the world," exclaims one German translator of the *Kalevala*,

"did those illiterate people acquire a style so terse and epigrammatic?" This question has not yet been answered. It can only be said that the Finnish singer is the heir of a long tradition, and that the style of the poems which he repeats has derived its aroma from a poetical culture of very old standing in his race.

All Finnish poems belonging strictly to the national literature are composed in verses of eight syllables, in an unrhymed metre like that of Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, who appears indeed to have derived it from Schiefner's German translation of the *Kalevala*. They are distinguished by elaborate systems of alliteration, assonance, and parallelism. The first two of these characteristics are found, of course, in most literatures, though not often in so highly developed a form; and the system of metric parallelism, the "rhyme of the sense," as it has been called, is familiar to everybody from the Hebrew psalms. In Finnish poetry, as in Hebrew, the second verse of each strophe repeats in other words, or re-presents with other shades of meaning, the thought or image expressed in the first verse. This scheme of versification, which at first sight appears monotonous, ends, as Xavier Marmier remarked, by leaving on the mind an impression of indefinable charm, of deep melody, and rich variations of thought.

The Finnish method of singing their songs is very archaic. They are, or were, accompanied by a kind of dulcimer, called the *kantele*, an instrument which originally contained five strings, made first of horsehair, and afterwards of metal.

The old melody which formed the usual accompaniment of the songs is founded in G minor, and does not go higher than D, nor lower than F sharp. The music given below is taken from Schröter's *Finnische Runen*, 1834.

While the *kantele* is being played, two singers sit opposite to each other, and, "having their hands locked together, accompany the instrument with their song and the motion of their bodies,

raising each other alternatively from their seats" —the survival, apparently, of an original dance. One of the singers recites or chants a verse, and his companion joins in the last word or two, and then repeats the verse alone. The first singer has now thought of the second verse, and this is sung in the same way.

"From the Word the Word is kindled,
From a spark the world is lit;
So by golden links extended,
Verse by verse the song is knit.

While the tongue a verse is singing,
From the brain another flows;
Verses are the singer's signposts;
Where they guide him, there he goes."
—*Kanteletar*, i. 9.

One poet declares that, after taking his seat upon a rock previously to singing, he takes off his furs and turns them inside out; and it appears from some passages in the *Kalevala* and the *Loitsurunoja* that the orthodox old practice was to sing without any clothes on at all. All these facts point to an origin in primitive religious ritual, and it is now quite certain that all the poetry of the Finns has its root in magical incantations.

The *Loitsurunoja* (Suomen Kansan Loitsurunoja, "The Magic Songs of the Finnish People")

was published in 1880, and contains nearly 900 charms, prayers, and other religious formulas. It is a vade-mecum of Finnish magic. A reputation for magic has always clung to this strange people—a reputation based, probably, upon the fact that their magic, their former religion, is in many respects different from that of their European neighbours, the Finns having originally migrated from Asia, and being distinct in racial characteristics from most of the people who live near them.

The Finnish system of magic, like that of the ancient Chaldæans, is based upon a belief in the universal presence of good and evil spirits, and in the power of words to influence them. But words spoken at random had no effect; it was necessary to know and use the particular formula suitable for each spirit and for each occasion. These formulas were at first the professional secrets of priests or wizards. The great work on magic, written in the Accadian language, and used for many centuries by the priests of Chaldæa, and the Finnish *Loitsurunoja*, collected verbally from Finnish wizards, both contain a great number of these special formulas, based upon a similar plan, and sometimes curiously alike in language. But the magic songs of the Finns differ from those of the Chaldæans in being all popular and beneficent, and they possess more poetic value.

The first part of the *Loitsurunoja* comprises a ritual of magic, consisting of a series of incantations for the general use of wizards. This ritual is rather elaborate. Let us suppose that a wizard has been called in to cure the toothache. He might commence operations by chanting one of the preliminary formulas, a number of which are given in the *Loitsurunoja*, summoning to his assistance all the good spirits of earth and air, all the gods and heroes, and all the mighty dead, in language of much poetic beauty. He might then chant one of the boasting formulas, setting forth his own knowledge and education and the hidden power of his art. In order to give himself further confidence, and to invigorate and strengthen his abilities, he could then sing a chant of ecstasy, yet more highly magnifying the sacred character of his office. He would then proceed to sing the song of the origin of the evil which he wished to cure—in this case the origin (*i.e.*, birth or pedigree) of toothache, toothache of course being an evil spirit. This is the central feature of the ritual. After he has sung the appropriate song of origin, the wizard proceeds to effective measures. He sings one of the songs of menace, threatening the evil spirit, toothache, with terrible pains and penalties unless it will leave the patient. Then follow an expulsion formula, in which he bids it fly away to the hill of pains, to

the ice-fields of the north, or some other remote spot; a posting formula, to speed it on its way post-haste; and finally, a chant of fastening, to pin it to the spot to which it has been driven, and to keep it there.

The second and third parts of the *Loitsurunoja* contain a number of charms for healing particular diseases and for particular occasions, and a collection of prayers addressed to the various gods and goddesses of Finnish mythology, or sometimes to the saints and deities of the Christian Church. These charms and prayers are often poems of great taste, beautiful in expression, and brilliant in imagery.

Here is a very short and simple specimen, a prayer used by sailors before putting to sea:—

"Ilo-lintu ilmahinen."

"O bird of joy! bird of the air!
Fly whither I command.
Fly to the infinite east,
Fly to the chambers of the morning sun!

Puff out your cheeks
And blow a favouring gale,
That I may have a fair wind,
And may freely pass
Over the wide waters,
Over the spacious seas!"

The last part of the *Loitsurunoja* consists of various songs of origin, magic chants reciting the

genesis of animals, diseases, and other things. The science of these origins is based, like almost all primitive science, upon analogy. The analogies are poetical, derisive, or humorous.

This is one of the origins of frost:—

"Frost! thine origin I'll sing thee,
Tell thy lineage of evil.
Well I know thine evil nature,
Know thine ancestry of evil.
Thou wast born among the willows,
In the clefts of icy hillocks;
Devastation was thy father,
And thy mother was Dishonour;
Adders gave thee suck, and vipers
Suckled thee with barren udders;
North winds rocked thee into slumber,
Cradled thee by evil rivers,
In the unthawed willow-marshes.
Evil-born and evil-nurtured,
Evil was his mind and spirit,
And the lubber boy was nameless
Till they named him 'Frost' and 'Anguish,'
'Blisterer,' 'Biter,' 'Bane of Toenails.'"

The collection of lyrics and ballad poetry to which Lönnrot gave the name *Kanteletar*, "The Daughter of the Dulcimer," is divided into three parts. The first part contains what are called "Songs for Everybody;" the second part, "Songs for Different People," that is to say, a large collection of girls' songs and women's songs, a

few boys' songs, and a number of men's songs. The third part contains ballads and romances.

The first song in the book strikes the keynote of the lyric genius of the Finns. It alludes to a passage in the *Kalevala* where Väinämöinen makes a harp or *kantele* with the bones of a great pike :—

"'Tis false, that idle story told
About our harp of plaintive tones,—
That Väinämöinen, wizard old,
Once formed it from a fish's bones.

From Misery the harp is sprung,
Its frame was moulded by Distress;
The strings by Sorrow's hands were strung,
And the pegs turned by Wretchedness.

O never may it wake to glee,
Nor leave its mournful plaint unsung,
Since it was born from Misery,
And Sorrow's hands the strings have strung!"

As one may gather from this introduction, the majority of the poems in the *Kanteletar* are songs of sorrow, the poetry of a deeply imaginative and thoughtful people living outside the central streams of history, suffering exile and poverty, but still preserving an upright spirit of independence and resignation, still nursing the unconquerable hope and looking forward to some great outcome from all their centuries of endurance. In song they find their consolation. Their whole

life is a life of poetry, and every incident is crowned with verse. This wide range is doubtless due originally to the demands of the old Finnish religion, which, as we have seen, required an appropriate formula for every situation.

The important ceremony of marriage, for instance, has thus become the centre of a most elaborate system of chants. At the wedding festivities which occur in the *Kalevala* there are not less than five cantos, comprising over 3000 verses, filled with these marriage songs; and a similar collection is given in the *Kanteletar*. They comprise the long Chant of Tears and the Chant of Consolation, both addressed to the bride before marriage; the Chants of Guidance for the bride; the Chants of a Daughter-in-law, setting forth at length all the drawbacks and inconveniencies of married life; the Song of Warning to the bridegroom; the Bride's Farewell, and the Songs of Welcome and of Badinage, sung upon the bride's arrival at her husband's house.

As a specimen of these marriage songs, I will quote—

THE BRIDE'S FAREWELL.

"Fare ye well, my native moorlands!
Now I leave the grassy uplands!
Now I leave the shining waters!
Now I leave the sandy beaches!
There the village crone may dabble,

There the shepherd bathe hereafter.
Pools I leave to other bathers,
To the wader leave the marshes,
Leave the hedgerows to the stranger,
Leave the heather to the roamer,
Leave the byeways to the beggar,
Father's meadows to the lynxes,
Father's ploughlands to the reindeer,
Moorlands for the geese to dwell on,
Woodlands for the birds to rest in.
Now I leave my father's dwelling,
Father's homestead, brother's storehouse,
And my sister's gentle bosom,
In the bitter springtide weather,
When my feet will leave no imprint
On the ice and frozen snowdrift.
Not a trace of me will linger;
Mother will not hear me crying,
Father will not hear me weeping,
When I weep with tears of anguish
And lament in hours of sorrow!"

—*Kanteletar*, i. 144.

The beauty of home, the misery of exile, the sadness of the breaking of old ties by death and trouble, the praises of the wise mother—these are the themes of many a song. "A crust of bread in my mother's house," says one, "is better than buttered bread elsewhere." "The whip my father used fell like wool or dew, but the stranger's scourge is a scourge of thorns." "My father's grindstone turned like a leaf in the wind," says another, "but to turn the stranger's grindstone is

to turn a mountain." The Songs of Exile, dating chiefly from Russia, are very pathetic.

"I recollect the days gone by,
Far happier every one;
More splendid was the sunset sky,
Brighter the morning sun.
The corn that sprouted to the air,
How differently it grew!
How green the growing rushes were
When I was growing too!
A fair and happy child was I
Within my own dear home,
A goodly house, was builded high
Above the sparkling foam.
But ah! Hell's messenger it was
Came thither on a day,
Death on the midnight hour did pass,
And carried me away:
He took me from my native shore,
He left me desolate;
He set me at another's door,
Within the stranger's gate.

O rarely here the sun doth shine!
Rarely the moonbeams gleam!
Rare is the cuckoo's voice divine,
Rare is the diver's scream!
Rarely the northern pike come near,
The salmon never come;
The silver salmon swims not here,
He swims beside my home!
I know the place where I was born,
My mother-country sweet;
I do not know this land forlorn,
Where Death has set my feet.

My spirit fails, my life is o'er,
This is my term of fate;
I perish at another's door,
Within the stranger's gate."

—*Kanteletar*, i. 32.

The Songs of the Girls deal mainly with the common topics of love and courtship; but, although love is a theme attractive enough, it hardly usurps the same predominant place in the life and songs of Finnish maidens as with their sisters in southern lands. There are a few poems in which they express a most true and tender devotion to the lover of their choice, as in the following song:—

"If my golden one were coming,
If my love were coming hither,
I should feel him stepping nearer,
O I should divine his coming
If he were a mile before me,
Though he were a league behind me.

Like a mist I'd scud towards him,
Drive to meet him like a vapour,
Fly like sparks upon a whirlwind,
Burn the air like flaming cinders,
Till I reached his side, and lifted
To his lips my loving kisses.

Gladly would I press his fingers,
Though his hands were full of vipers
And I'd kiss him, O! how gladly!
Though his lips were full of poison:

Hang upon his neck, how gladly!
Though his neck had death upon it;
Gladly to his bosom nestle,
Though his blood were on his bosom.

But how all unlike my darling!
There's no blood upon his bosom,
In his hands he has no vipers,
On his lips no deadly poison.
No, his mouth is soft as butter,
And his lips are sweet as honey,
Golden jewels are his fingers,
And his neck a stem of heather!"

—*Kanteletar*, ii. 43.

Amongst the lyrics in the first and second parts of the *Kanteletar* are a number of pastoral songs, used by shepherds and other herdsmen, and a large collection of hunting songs, which are said by Finnish scholars to be the oldest in the book. They are mostly prayers to the various deities of the forest for good-luck and guidance. A Finnish hunter, on starting for the chase, would address an ode to Mielikki, the mistress of the woods, beseeching her to appear to him clothed in silk and gold; for, if she appeared in less splendid apparel, he would have no luck. Should he lose his way, he prayed to the daughter of the Forest, the Twilight Maiden, begging her to spin a thread of gold to guide him through the dusky woods. Then there are different songs for different kinds of hunting—songs of bear-hunting,

bird-hunting, hare-hunting. All these songs are addressed to the animals: the bird is requested to fly into the net; the bear is approached with most courteous language, and killed with many apologies. This politeness is said to be a relic of animal-worship.

The war-songs are very few. The Finns have acquired some reputation as soldiers, not only in border warfare, but chiefly when serving under Gustavus Adolphus they made their war-shout so formidable throughout Germany. According to Lord Macaulay, they have held their own against British troops on British soil at the battle of the Boyne. But although the Finn can fight well when obliged to fight, he is not naturally warlike, and his songs of war are few and feeble. One indeed is a prayer for peace; another is a thanksgiving on the conclusion of a truce; while in a third, which is a charm for use during a naval engagement, the singer beseeches the queen of the air to come like Athène in the *Iliad* and spread a dense fog between the combatants.

The third part of the *Kanteletar* contains about 140 ballads and romances, divided into four classes —(1) ancient, (2) mediæval, (3) historical, and (4) miscellaneous.

Many of these ballads are originals or variants of episodes in the *Kalevala*, not unfrequently derived from Russian sources. Many of them

relate various incidents in the picturesque courtships of an exogamous people. They begin generally with a conversation between the hero and his mother, when the former declares his intention of wooing some foreign maiden, and his mother vainly tries to dissuade him by describing the dangers of the enterprise. The hero pooh-poohs all difficulties, calls for his horse and sledge, and drives off furiously. When he comes to the lady's house, he demands her hand, and is then generally set to perform sundry tasks or trials of love, in the successful accomplishment of which he is sometimes helped by the girl. At last he carries off the bride in his sledge and drives home. The girl weeps, and beseeches him to restore her to her parents. When a wild animal crosses the way, she envies the creature's freedom, till at last her husband is so tired of her peevishness, that he resolves to get rid of her. In some stories he changes her into a seagull, a tree, or a pebble on the beach; in others, he kills her with a primitive barbarity similar to that recorded in the old Scotch ballad of Gil Brenton, but even more repulsive. In other ballads, after he has killed her a beautiful tree grows from her blood; in others, he brings the girl to his home, where she dies, and he then makes himself a golden statue for a wife.

There are only nine ballads which are classed

by Lönnrot as historical, although some of the mediæval romances are founded on fact, the most interesting of which to Englishmen is a vivid description of the murder of our countryman, Bishop Henry, a Christian missionary of the twelfth century, who was afterwards canonised and became the patron saint of Finland. Another celebrated ballad, *Elina's Death*, which has been dramatised and placed upon the Finnish stage, is founded upon an actual occurrence of the fifteenth century. It is the story of Othello and Desdemona, with a female Iago, and a large part of it consists of very dramatic dialogue.

There are a few religious poems, such as a poor imitation of the Swedish version of *The Maid and the Palmer* and the ballad of *Maid Mary*, which appears again in the last canto of the *Kalevala*.

The *Kalevala*, upon its first appearance, was hailed as a national epic, worthy to be ranked, as Professor Max Müller enthusiastically declared, beside the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It is now, however, well known to scholars that it is not, properly speaking, a national epic at all. It is a compilation made from many independent cycles of poems, and welded into an artistic whole by the literary genius of Dr. Lönnrot. It is not a forgery, for almost every part of it is a genuine national product; but each part has been used

with an artist's freedom towards the production of a poetic whole which never existed before. The original elements of the *Kalevala*, however, have been carefully preserved, and it is thus possible to unravel the various threads of which the poem is woven. This process of separating the original verses from their artificial context has been accomplished very skilfully and laboriously by Finnish scholars, and the general result of their analysis is to fill one with admiration for the literary genius which, with alterations comparatively few and slight, has been able to mould so many disconnected tales and songs into a poem so complete.

The main body of the *Kalevala* is composed from four cycles of songs:—

1. The Sampo songs, which include the Finnish myth of creation.

2. Songs relating to the national hero, Väinämöinen, outside the Sampo cycle.

3. The songs of Lemminkäinen or Ahti.

4. The songs of Kullervo.

Besides these four main cycles of song, there are seven distinct romances woven into the fabric of the *Kalevala*, chiefly of Russian and Oriental origin.

They are (1) The Tale of Aino; (2) The Fishing for the Mermaid; (3) The Wooing of the Daughter of the Air; (4) The Golden Bride; (5)

The Wooing of the Son of Kojo; (6) The Captivity and Deliverance of the Sun and Moon; and (7) The Story of the Virgin Maria.

The interstices of the poem are filled in with a vast number of prayers, chants, religious formulas, and other magic songs, more than fifty of which are songs of origin, some of great length.

The story of the quest and rape of Sampo, the Golden Fleece of Finnish Argonauts, is the kernel of the whole poem, which alone gives it any epic flavour. The most complete version of this story, known as the "Archangel Sampo Song," was discovered first by a Finnish scholar in one of the Finnish districts of Northern Russia in the year 1825. This song records the expeditions of Finnish heroes to a country called Pohjola, the frozen North. This country was also called the Land of Mana, the god of death, the Finns associating death and torture with the icy North, as nations of hot climates find their ideal of Hades in the burning desert. Thus the old Chaldæan sorcerer tried to drive all evil spirits into the parching sands, while the wizard of the North bade them fly to the ice plains of Pohjola, the land of death and habitation of devils. The chief of these devils, often alluded to in the wizards' chants and one of the most prominent personages of the *Kalevala*, is Louhi, the "Hostess of Pohjola," as she is termed, a crafty witch, who

is the strongest power with which the Finnish Argonauts are confronted. The incidents of their expeditions are twofold. They go to woo the daughters of Louhi, whom they obtain by performing sundry hard tasks, and carry off in their sledges like the heroes of the ballads. The other incident is the forging and subsequent stealing of Sampo. This Sampo was made by Ilmarinen, the divine smith who manufactured the dome of heaven. Its form is variously conceived, but it is generally a sort of wonder-working mill, from which anything can be ground, and which consequently brings unrivalled prosperity to the country which possesses it. So long as it remained in Pohjola the land enjoyed good fortune, and, to protect it from robbers, it was imprisoned deep in the earth. An expedition for the purpose of stealing Sampo, and bringing this good fortune to the Finns, is organised by three superhuman beings—Väinämöinen, the ideal wizard; Ilmarinen, the ideal smith; and a third companion, who is variously named. In the *Kalevala*, Lönnrot calls him Lemminkäinen, but only in order to connect the Sampo story with Lemminkäinen's. In the Archangel song he is called Water-Liito. The heroes plough up Sampo and carry it off in their ship. They are pursued by Louhi and her hosts of devils, and, although they contrive to escape, their treasure is wrecked after all,

and lost in the sea. And so they return home, bringing to the Finns only a few recovered fragments—the meagre elements of prosperity which alone remain to those children of misfortune.

Among the romantic episodes of the *Kalevala* there is no more characteristic example of Finnish narrative poetry than the tale of Aino, that strange sad poem which the Finns appear to recognise as peculiarly their own, and have reproduced in many other artistic forms—in painting and sculpture, and also in the drama.

The story is very simple, and may be read in Crawford's translation of the *Kalevala*, although it has been slightly altered by Lönnrot in order to bring it into connection with the rest of the poem; the identification of Aino's wooer with Väinämöinen, and of Aino herself with the mermaid whom Väinämöinen catches, being pure inventions of the great Finnish scholar.

A lovely maiden goes into the woods to gather twigs for making those bath-whisks which are an indispensable requisite for the Finnish toilet. There she is met by old Väinämöinen, the Merlin of Finnish romance, who tells her that he loves her, and that she must be his. The girl answers proudly and goes home in tears. Her mother asks her what is the matter, and, when Aino tells her, is not at all displeased at the prospect of her daughter's marriage with so distinguished a suitor.

She bids the girl wait awhile, and then put on her best dress, and prepare to marry the old man.

"But Aino gave no heed to her mother's words, nor listened to her bidding. She went out into the yard to weep, and spoke these words and said: 'Unto what shall I compare the heart of the happy and the contented soul? The heart of the happy, the contented soul, they are like running water or the bubbles in yonder tank. Unto what shall I compare the soul of the unhappy, the heart of the desolate bird? The soul of the unhappy, the heart of the desolate bird, they are like the icicle that hangs from the roof, they are like the water in a deep well. . . . Better had it been for me, far better, if I had not been born, if I had not grown up, if I had not become as old as I am in these days of trouble, in this joyless hour! Better if I had lived six nights, if I had died upon the eighth day, if I had lived but a short while, and wanted but a little linen shroud, and only a small patch of earth!'"

Again her mother asks her why she is weeping, and she replies:—

"I am weeping, unhappy maid! I pass my time in sorrow, because thou hast devoted thine own poor child to become an old man's nurse; to comfort him in his old age, and to be his stay in sickness. Better far hadst thou devoted me to

the bottom of the sea, to become the salmon's sister and comrade of the ocean fish! It is better to swim the waves and remain in the deep sea, to be the salmon's sister and comrade of the ocean fish, than to be an old man's nurse, to comfort him in his age, to be his stay in sickness, to prop his feebleness, and help him when he totters!"

As her mother is determined still that the marriage shall take place, Aino leaves her home secretly, and wanders about in great misery for two days. On the morning of the third day "she looked out over the brow of the headland very early, and there were three maidens over the headland's brow, bathing in the sea. Four times the damsel Aino looked at them, five times the willowy maiden looked. Then she cast her clothing upon a willow-tree, she threw her stockings on the bare ground, her shoes upon a rock, her pearls upon the sand, her rings upon the shingly beach.

"There was a many-coloured rock standing in the sea, a bright, smooth, golden stone. She tried to swim to the rock; she wished to reach the smooth stone. As soon as she reached it, and sat down upon the many coloured rock—the bright, smooth, golden stone—the rock slipped suddenly into the water, the golden stone sank into the deep, and with the rock the maiden fell; Aino sank down with the golden stone."

In her dying song she prays that her father may never more draw fish from the water of that bay, that her brother may never bring there his war-horse, that her sister may never come there to bathe her eyelids.

"Every drop of water in this bay is a drop of my blood, and the sea fishes are my flesh. Many are the reeds upon the shore, which are my ribs; many the blades of grass are tangles of my hair!"

The news of Aino's death is brought to her parents' house by the swift-footed hare. He squats on the threshold of the bath-house, which is full of merry girls playing with bath-whisks. They begin to chaff the hare, and propose to put him into the pot to be cooked for dinner; but the hare informs them that he has come as a messenger, whose person is sacred, to bring grave news. Their sister Aino is drowned in the sea; she has become the salmon's sister, and comrade of the ocean fish.

The mother of Aino overhears the message, and is stricken with remorse and sorrow. "She began to weep, she let the fountain of her tears overflow; and as she moaned and wept, she began to speak, and said, 'O mothers! doomed to sorrow! never, O never in your lives attempt to urge your daughters, to make your children marry against their will, as I have done, unhappy

mother, with my sweet chicken, my fledgling child!'"

Her tears roll down to the ground, and their course is described with all the Oriental extravagance of Finnish imagination. They form three rivers, in each river is an island, on each island a birch-tree, and on each birch-tree a cuckoo —the sacred bird on the sacred tree.

"The golden cuckoos are singing. And the first cuckoo sings, 'O Love! O Love!' And the second cuckoo sings, 'O Lover! Lover!' And the third cuckoo sings, 'O Joy and Gladness!'"

Three months the cuckoo sings, "O Love, O Love!"—a dirge for the loveless maiden in the deep sea's bosom.

Six months the cuckoo sings, "O Lover! Lover!"—a dirge for the lover who has lost his love.

And all his life the cuckoo sings, "O Joy and Gladness!"—a dirge for the joyless mother, who must wear out the days in weeping.

When the mother heard the cuckoos singing, she said, "Alas for the poor mother who hears the cuckoo singing late and early! When the cuckoo calls, my heart trembles, the tears gather in my eyes, my joints grow old, my hands are feeble, all my body aches and groans whenever in the spring I hear the cuckoo's call!"

The limits of my space will not allow me to

pursue the contents of the *Kalevala* much further. But I may note that the heart of the poem, the peculiar essence of Finnish life and genius, is a remarkably deep sense of the sacredness of Home. That beautiful *Suomi*, "the land of the thousand lakes," which has been the chosen home of the Western Finns for some seventeen centuries, is the object of a profound patriotism which inspires all their singers. More powerful still are the ties of natural affection. In few countries are the bonds of family love so closely drawn as those which consecrate the Finnish cottage, and nowhere, I think, have they found such poetical expression in a people's songs. As one instance among many, let me refer briefly to the fifteenth canto of the *Kalevala*, which tells how the love of Lemminkäinen's mother was stronger than death. I give a very condensed version.

"The mother set forth to find her son, and long she wandered over fen and fell, calling him by name, and seeking for some trace. And she cried to the Pathways: 'O Pathways, ye works of God, have you seen my son, my little golden apple, my silvery sapling?'

"Sadly the Pathways answered her: 'We ourselves have trouble enough, without taking trouble for thy son. We are trodden down by wolf and bear, we are trodden under the feet of men.'

"Then she cried to the Moon: 'O Moon, thou

work of God, hast thou seen my son, my little golden apple, my silvery sapling?'

"But the Moon said: 'I myself have trouble enough, without taking trouble for thy son. I must wander alone through the night, I must shine all alone in the frosty sky until the summer comes.'

"Then she cried to the Sun: 'O Sun, thou work of God, hast thou seen my son, my little golden apple, my silvery sapling?'

"The all-seeing Sun answered her with a kind voice: 'Thy unhappy son has perished in the black river of Death, and gone to the regions of Tuoni.'

"So the mother of Lemminkäinen took her way to the smith's forge, and said: 'Forge me a rake, O Smith, and let the teeth be a hundred fathoms long, and the handle five hundred fathoms.'

"So she takes the iron rake, and hastens to the river of Death. And then she prays: 'O Sun, thou work of God, send hither thy rays of light and heat, shine on this realm of darkness, and lull to sleep Tuoni's people.'

"Then the Sun, the work of God, flew like a bird through the Northern birch-trees, and sitting on a bough shot forth his rays and lulled to sleep the Kingdom of Tuoni. Then he flew back, and returned to his heavenly home.

"The grey-haired mother took her iron rake and drew it twice through the stream of Death. The third time it brought up the body of her son. But there were many fragments wanting, the head, the hands, and other portions—above all life was wanting. The mother threw once more her rake into the water, and raked up the head and hands and all the missing fragments, and then, putting the pieces together skilfully, flesh to flesh, and bone to bone, she fashioned anew the body of her son. And Lemminkäinen was restored to the likeness of his former self, only the breath of life was wanting. And his mother rejoiced to see again her son's form, but a raven sang: 'Nevermore can the man live; the fish have picked his eyes, the pike has torn his breast. Cast him back into the waters of Death that he may become some whale, some monster of the deep.' But the mother would not cast her son back into the waters, but cradled the body in her arms, and cried: 'Where shall I find a remedy? where shall I find a drop of honey to heal my son? O honey-bee, king of the woodland blossoms, sweet honey-birdling of the air, fly up beyond the moon, beyond the sun, into the heaven of heavens, and dip thy winglets in the breath of God, and bring my son the balm of life!' And the little bee flew up beyond the moon, beyond the sun, into the heaven of heavens, and brought

back the breath of life, and the grey-haired mother anointed her son with the healing balm, and he awoke from death, braver and fairer than before."

In conclusion, I cannot but feel how unsatisfactory is the attempt to give any idea of poetry so artistic and sincere, yet so widely differing from our own, within the space at my disposal. I fear the few pieces which I have given in English—a language so far removed from their own—will convey a very feeble impression of the general effect of Finnish verse. There is also a superficial strangeness in the thought and imagination, not less than in the mode of expression, used by Finnish poets, which will not allow us to perceive at first sight how uncorrupted are their hearts, how true their taste, how wise their simple philosophy. They are no great masterpieces, to be sure, these Finnish poems; they do not challenge comparison with the classical works of European literature; they will never be included in any curriculum of education. But they are not on that account unworthy of our notice. All that I would humbly urge on behalf of Finnish poetry is this. In the first place, it will give us a better liking for the Finns when we realise that they possess a literature, not indeed of the first order, but always graceful and always pure. And the

Finns, oppressed and betrayed as they have been, are sorely in want of friends. And in the second place I would suggest that the books which we are accustomed to demand from our own popular writers, and which they supply with punctuality so unfailing, may betray at times something of a mechanical ring. If that be so, a reader may obtain perhaps the best antidote by turning to the products of an age less artificial than ours, to literature fresh and simple, like that of the *Kalevala* and the *Kanteletar*, literature which draws its inspiration, not from any private ambition nor from the demands and caprices of the market, but from the general heart of a whole nation irresistibly blooming into song.

# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

*** *There is a very large critical literature, written mainly in Finnish and Swedish; but in the following short notes I refer only, as a rule, to accessible books written in English, French, or German.*

## THE COLLECTION AND PUBLICATION OF FINNISH POPULAR POETRY (page 1).

The first publication referred to in the text was that of Gabriel Maxenius, *De effectibus fascino-naturalibus*, Abo, 1733. The work was continued by Bishop Juslenius, who published the first Finnish-Latin-German Lexicon in 1745, and made a large collection of songs which was accidentally burned. Towards the close of the century the mythology and popular poetry of the Finns were closely studied by Henrik Gabriel Porthan, Kristfrid Ganander, and Erik Lencqvist. Porthan's Dissertation, *De Poesi Fennica*, the first systematic treatise on the subject, was published at Abo in five parts, 1766–1778. Lencqvist's Essay, *De superstitione Veterum Fennorum theoretica et practica*, was published at Abo in 1782. Ganander's Mythological Glossary, *Mythologia Fennica*, was published at Abo in 1789.

The collection and publication of songs were carried on during the first half of the nineteenth century by Carl Axel Gottlund, whose Dissertation, *De Proverbiis Fennicis*, was published at Upsala in 1818, by Zacharias Topelius, whose collections ("Old Runes and Modern Songs of the Finnish People") were published at Abo and Helsingfors, 1822–1831, by Von Schröter (*Finnische Runen*, finn. und deutsch, 1st edn., Upsala, 1819), and above all by Dr. Elias Lönnrot.

Lönnrot's publications include the following:—

*De Vainamoine priscorum Fennorum numine*, 1827.

*Kantele* (a collection of various kinds of songs gathered from Finnish peasants), 1829.

*Om Finnarnes Magiska Medicin*, 1832.

*Kalevala*, 1st edn. (old Kalevala), Helsingfors, 1835; 2nd edn. (complete Kalevala), 1849.

*Kanteletar*, 1st edn., 1840 (with variants); 3rd edn., 1887.

*Proverbs*, 1840. *Riddles*, 1844.

*Loitsurunoja*, 1880.

The other chief authorities on the subject (mainly of later date) are Europaeus, Rein, Castrén, Grimm, Donner, Hertzberg, Julius Krohn, Borenius, Schiefner, and Ahlqvist. The student is referred to a list of their works on p. xxxiii. of the edition of the *Kalevala*, published at Helsingfors in 1887 (price 3 marks). Many important essays will be found in the sixteen published numbers of the *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne*, Helsingfors, 1886–1899.

### Finnish Culture (page 2).

A full account of the various developments of Finnish culture at the present time will be found in *Finland in the Nineteenth Century*, an English version of which was published at Helsingfors in 1895.

### The Kalevala (page 3).

The best critical work on the *Kalevala* is that of Professor Comparetti (German edition, Halle, 1892. English translation under the title *The Traditional Poetry of the Finns*, London, 1898). Besides Crawford's English version of the *Kalevala* (2 vols., New York and London, 1889), and a small volume of *Selections from*

*the Kalevala* by Dr. J. A. Porter (New York, 1873), there are two good German translations, by A. Schiefner (Helsingfors, 1852) and by H. Paul (2 vols., Helsingfors, 1885–86). There is also a French version, with a long historical and mythological introduction, by Léouzon Le Duc (1st edition, under the title *La Finlande*, 2 vols., Paris, 1845; new edition under the title *Le Kalevala*, Paris, 1879). The first edition of Le Duc's work, and also the Swedish version by Castrén (Helsingfors, 1841), are both translations of the first edition of Lönnrot's compilation, called the *Old Kalevala*, which contains only thirty-two cantos instead of fifty.

A popular account of the *Kalevala*, with extracts from Crawford, is given in *People of Finland in Archaic Times*, by J. C. Brown (London, 1892). See also Latham's *Nationalities of Europe* (2 vols., London, 1863); Andrew Lang, *Custom and Myth* (2nd edition, London, 1885); and *Homer and the Epic* (London, 1893).

THE FINNISH KANTELE (pages 5–6).

There is an account and a good illustration of Finnish kantele-players in Acerbi's *Travels through Sweden, Finland, and Lapland*, 1802. See also Du Chaillu's *Land of the Midnight Sun* (4th edition, 2 vols., London, 1888). On Finnish music, see the *Proceedings of the International Folklore Congress* (London, 1892), and an essay by Ilmari Krohn on *Die Art und Entstehung der geistlichen Volksmelodien in Finland* (*Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne, XVI.*, Helsingfors, 1899).

THE LOITSURUNOJA (page 7).

The Hon. John Abercromby has translated a large part of the contents of the *Loitsurunoja* in the second volume of his *Pre- and Proto-historic Finns, both Eastern and Western, with the Magic Songs of the West Finns* (London

1898). The first volume of this work contains the only English sketch of early Finnish civilisation and mythology. An essay by Beauvais, *La Magie chez les Finnois*, in the *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 1882, may also be consulted.

THE KANTELETAR (page 11).

There is no English translation of the *Kanteletar*, but there are good poetical renderings in German of some of the songs by H. Paul (*Kanteletar, die Volkslyrik der Finnen*, Helsingfors, 1882). A few songs are also given in Retzius' *Finnland* (Berlin, 1885). Xavier Marmier translated one or two, and added some interesting remarks on the lyric poetry of the Finns in his *Lettres sur la Russie, la Finlande et la Pologne* (2 vols., Paris, 1843).

OPPRESSION OF THE FINNS (page 33).

A very fair and accurate statement of the historical relations between the Finns and Russia will be found in *Finland and the Tsars*, 1809–99, by Joseph R. Fisher, B.A., London, 1900. (Price 12s. 6d.)

THE END

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THE PRE- AND PROTO-HISTORIC FINNS, BOTH EASTERN AND WESTERN, WITH A TRANSLATION OF THE MAGIC SONGS OF THE WEST FINNS. By the Hon. JOHN ABERCROMBY, Corresponding Member of the Finno-Ugrian Society. 2 vols., crown 8vo. Upwards of 400 pages each. With Maps and Illustrations. £1, 1s. nett. (Grimm Library, vols. ix. x.)

## *PRESS NOTICES*

"We must congratulate the author upon the successful completion of these two volumes, the outcome of indefatigable labour in an extensive and far too little known field of study. . . . There can be little doubt that this new book on the Finns will be invaluable to the folk-lorist. A large part of the first volume will interest the archæologist, treating as it does of an out-of-the-way department of his study. The author has paid particular attention to the craniology of the Finns, and has added to his text several tables, giving the comparative measurements of skulls from widely different localities."—*Athenæum.*

"Mr. Abercromby's chapter on religion and on prehistoric civilisation in general is rich in facts, and is of great value. After tracing the Finns through successive historical periods of foreign influence, he discusses their magical beliefs, which are of the usual barbaric or

'Shamanistic' kind. A second volume contains magical songs, in which aspects of nature are personified, the mystic power of words is illustrated, and we see Shamanistic lays gliding into semi-Christian incantations. Mr. Abercromby's work is of the highest anthropological interest."—*Times.*

"A learned and painstaking study of the ethnography, the languages and the folk-lore of that widely-diffused family of mankind whom we commonly call, from the branch which we know best, the Finnish."—*The Speaker.*

"The inclusion of the magic songs and folk-lore of the Finns in the 'Grimm Library of Folk-lore' was a necessity, but the question was, Who would be bold enough to undertake so difficult a task? . . . Mr. Abercromby has for many years devoted himself to the study of Mongolian philology, especially of its Western branches, and was therefore qualified to undertake the task. His work is manifestly the result of several years' labour, and extends far beyond the limits of folk-lore proper. The first volume may be in a certain degree regarded as an introduction to the songs, some six hundred in number, which will be found a veritable gold-mine for the mythologist." —*Manchester Guardian.*

"A careful description of the gradual social evolution of the Finno-Ugrian races, with translations of the magic-songs of the Western Finns."—*Notes and Queries.*

"To English readers Mr. Abercromby's two volumes will come as a sort of revelation, bringing before them a mass of information about an obscure but interesting race, and introducing them to a civilisation old and peculiar, and in many respects strange."—*Scottish Review*, March 1899.

"To a translation of 639 'Magic Songs' of the West Finns, grouped under 233 headings, and occupying over 300 pages, he has prefixed an elaborate introduction, filling nearly 400 pages, in which all that is known concerning the early annals of the Finn races from their first coming to Europe in prehistoric times, their physical and intellectual characteristics, their customs and superstitions, are brought together, and subjected to study and analysis."—*Scotsman.*

# THE FAIRY MYTHOLOGY OF SHAKESPEARE

FEW things are more marvellous in the marvellous English poetic literature of the last three centuries than the persistence of the fairy note throughout the whole of its evolution. As we pass on from Shakespeare and his immediate followers to Herrick and Milton, through the last ballad writers to Thomson and Gray, and then note in Percy and Chatterton the beginnings of the romantic revival which culminated in Keats and Coleridge, was continued by Tennyson, the Rossettis, and Mr. Swinburne, until in our own days it has received a fresh accession of life alike from Ireland and from Gaelic Scotland, we are never for long without hearing the horns of Elfland faintly winding, never for long are we denied access to

> "Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn."

We could not blot out from English poetry its visions of the fairyland without a sense of

irreparable loss. No other literature save that of Greece alone can vie with ours in its pictures of the land of phantasy and glamour, or has brought back from that mysterious realm of unfading beauty treasures of more exquisite and enduring charm.

There is no phenomenon without a cause; but in the immense complexity of historical record it is not always easy to detect the true cause, and to trace its growth and working until the result delight us. Why does the fairy note ring so perfectly throughout that literature of modern England which has its roots in and which derives the best of its life's blood from the wonderful half-century: 1580–1630? Reasons, causes must exist, nor—let me here forestall a possible objection—do we wrong genius by seeking to discover them. Rather, I hope, may individual genius, however pre-eminent, acquire fresh claims to our love and gratitude when we note that it is no arbitrary and isolated phenomenon, but stands in necessary relation to the totality of causes and circumstances which have shaped the national character. And, should we find these causes and circumstances still potent for influence, may we not look forward with better confidence to the future of our poetic literature?

Early in the half-century of which I have just spoken, some time between 1590 and 1595, appeared

the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the crown and glory of English delineation of the fairy world. Scarce any one of Shakespeare's plays has had a literary influence so immediate, so widespread, and so enduring. As pictured by Shakespeare, the fairy realm became, almost at once, a convention of literature in which numberless poets sought inspiration and material. I need only mention Drayton, Ben Jonson, Herrick, Randolph, and Milton himself. Apart from any question of its relation to popular belief, of any grounding in popular fancy, Shakespeare's vision stood by itself, and was accepted as the ideal presentment of fairydom which, for two centuries at least, has signified to the average Englishman of culture the world depicted in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. To this day, works are being produced deriving form and circumstance and inspiration (such as it is) wholly from Shakespeare.

Now if we compare these literary presentations of Faery, based upon Shakespeare, with living folklore, where the latter has retained the fairy belief with any distinctness, we find almost complete disagreement; and if, here and there, a trait seems common, it is either of so general a character as to yield no assured warrant of kinship, or there is reason to suspect contamination of the popular form by the literary ideal derived from and built up out of Shakespeare.

Yet if we turn back to the originator of literary fairyland, to the poet of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, we can detect in *his* picture all the essentials of the fairy creed as it has appealed, and still appeals, to the faith and fancy of generations more countless than ever acknowledged the sway of any of the great world-religions, we can recover from it the elements of a conception of life and nature older than the most ancient recorded utterance of earth's most ancient races.

Whence, then, did Shakespeare draw his account of the fairy world? As modern commentators have pointed out, from at least two sources: the folk-belief of his day and the romance literature of the previous four centuries. This or that trait has been referred to one or the other source; the differences between these two have been dwelt upon, and there, as a rule, the discussion has been allowed to rest. What I shall essay to prove is that in reality sixteenth-century folk-belief and mediæval fairy romance have their ultimate origin in one and the same set of beliefs and rites; that the differences between them are due to historical and psychological causes, the working of which we can trace; that their reunion, after ages of separation, in the England of the late sixteenth century, is due to the continued working of those same causes; and that, as a result of this reunion, which took

place in England because in England alone it could take place, English poetry became free of Fairydom, and has thus been enabled to preserve for the modern world a source of joy and beauty which must otherwise have perished.

I observed just now that the modern literary presentation of Faery (which is almost wholly dependent upon Shakespeare) differed essentially from the popular one still living in various districts of Europe, nowhere, perhaps, more tenaciously than in some of the Celtic-speaking portions of these isles. I may here note, according to the latest, and in this respect the best, editor of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mr. Chambers, what are the characteristics of the Shakespearian fairies. He ranges them as follows:—

(*a*) They form a community under a king and queen. (*b*) They are exceedingly small. (*c*) They move with extreme swiftness. (*d*) They are elemental *airy* spirits; their brawls incense the wind and moon, and cause tempests; they take a share in the life of nature; live on fruit; deck the cowslips with dewdrops; war with noxious insects and reptiles; overcast the sky with fog, &c. (*e*) They dance in orbs upon the green. (*f*) They sing hymns and carols to the moon. (*g*) They are invisible and ap-

parently immortal. (*h*) They come forth mainly at night. (*i*) They fall in love with mortals. (*j*) They steal babies and leave changelings. (*k*) They come to bless the best bride-bed and make the increase thereof fortunate.

This order of characteristics is, I make little doubt, what would occur to most well-read Englishmen, and denotes what impressed the fancy of Shakespeare's contemporaries and of the after-world. The fairy community, with its quaintly fantastic parody of human circumstance; the minute size and extreme swiftness of the fairies, which insensibly assimilate them in our mind to the winged insect world—these traits would strike us at first blush, and these have been insisted upon and developed by the imitators of Shakespeare; only on second thoughts should we note their share in the life of nature, should we recall their sway over its benign and malign manifestations, and this side of fairy activity is wholly ignored by later fairy literature.

Yet a moment's reflection will convince us that the characteristics upon which Shakespeare seems to lay most stress, which have influenced later poets and story-tellers, and to which his latest editor assigns the first place, are only secondary, and can in no way explain either

how the fairy belief arose nor what was its real hold upon popular imagination. The peasant stooping over his spade, toilfully winning his bread from Mother Earth, was scarce so enamoured with the little he knew of kings and queens that he must feign the existence of an invisible realm; nor would the contrast, which touches alike our fantasy and our sense of the ludicrous, between minute size and superhuman power appeal to him. The peasant had far other cause to fear and reverence the fairy world. In his daily struggle with nature he could count upon fairy aid if he performed with due ceremony the ancient ritual handed down to him by his forefathers; but woe betide him if, through carelessness or sluttish neglect of these rites, he aroused fairy wrath—not help, but hindrance and punishment would be his lot. And if neglect was hateful to these mysterious powers of nature, still more so was prying interference—they work as they list, and when man essays to change and, in his own conceit, to better the old order, the fairy vanishes. All this the peasant knows; it is part of that antique religion of the soil which means so much more to him than our religions do to us, because upon it, as he conceives, depend his and his children's sustenance. But be he as attentive as he may to the rites by which the fairy world may be placated and with which it

must be worshipped, there come times and seasons of mysterious calamity, convulsions in the invisible world, and then—

"The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard;
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock.
. . . . . .
No night is now with hymn or carol blest;
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound:
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter."

Such calamities are luckily rare, though, as the peasant full well knows, the powers he dreads and believes in can—

". . . . . overcast the night,
The starry welkin cover up anon
With drooping fog as black as Acheron."

But as a rule, they are kindlier disposed; not alone do they war with blight, and fog, and flood, and all powers hostile to the growth of vegetation, but increase of flock and herd, of mankind also, seems good in their eyes—it may be because they know their tithes will be duly paid, and that their own interests are inextricably bound up with that of the mortals whom they aid and mock at, whom they counsel and reprove and befool.

Here let me note that not until the peasant belief has come into the hands of the cultured man do we find the conception of an essential incompatibility between the fairy and the human worlds—of the necessary disappearance of the one before the advance of the other. Chaucer, if I mistake not, first voiced this conception in English literature. In words to be quoted presently, he relegates the fairies to a far backward of time, and assigns their disappearance, satirically it is true, to the progress of Christianity. To the peasant, fairydom is part of the necessary machinery by which the scheme of things, as known to him, is ordered and governed; he may wish for less uncanny deities, but he could not conceive the world without them; their absence is no cause of rejoicing, rather of anxiety as due to his own neglect of the observances which they expect and which are the price of their favour.

I do not, of course, claim that the foregoing brief sketch of the psychological basis of the fairy creed, as exemplified in still living beliefs of the peasantry throughout Europe, represents the view of it taken by Shakespeare and his literary contemporaries, but yet it is based wholly upon evidence they furnish. And if we turn to the bald and scanty notes of English fairy mythology, to which we can with certainty assign a date earlier than the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, we

shall find what may be called the rustic element of the fairy creed insisted upon, proportionately, to a far greater extent than in Shakespeare. Reginald Scot and the few writers who allude to the subject at all, ignore entirely the delicate fantastic traits that characterise Shakespeare's elves; they are wanting precisely in what we, with an ideal derived from Shakespeare in our mind, should call the "fairylike" touch; they are rude and coarse and earthy. And, not implicitly, but explicitly, a conception of the true nature of these peasant deities found expression in Shakespeare's own days. At the very time the *Midsummer Night's Dream* was being composed or played, Nash wrote as follows: "The Robin-good-fellows, elfs, fairies, hobgoblins of our latter age, which idolatrous former days and the fantastical world of Greece ycleped Fauns, Satyrs, Dryads, Hamadryads, did most of their pranks in the night"—a passage in which the parallel suggested is far closer and weightier in import than its author imagined.

The popular element in Shakespeare's fairy mythology is, then, the same as that testified to by somewhat earlier writers, but touched with the finest spirit alike of grace and humour, and presented in a form exquisitely poetical. Naturally enough it is accidental and secondary characteristics of the fairy world which are empha-

sised by the poet, who is solely concerned with what may heighten the beauty or enliven the humour of his picture. But with his unerring instinct for what is vital and permanent in that older world of legend and fancy, to which he so often turned for inspiration, he has yet retained enough to enable us to detect the essence of the fairy conception, in which we must needs recognise a series of peasant beliefs and rites of a singularly archaic character. If we further note that, so far as the outward guise and figure of his fairies is concerned, Shakespeare is borne out by a series of testimonies reaching back to the twelfth-century Gervase of Tilbury and Gerald the Welshman, who give us glimpses of a world of diminutive and tricky sprites—we need not dwell longer at present upon this aspect of Elfland, but can turn to the fay of romance.

It is evident that Shakespeare derived both the idea of a fairy realm reproducing the external aspect of a mediæval court, and also the name of his fairy king from mediæval romance, that is, from the Arthurian cycle, from those secondary works of the Charlemagne cycle, which, like Huon of Bordeaux, were modelled upon the Arthur romances, and from the still later purely literary imitations alike of the Arthur and the Charlemagne stories. But the Oberon of romance has been regarded as a being totally different in essence

and origin from the Robin Goodfellow, the Puck of peasant belief, and their bringing together in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* as an inspiration of individual genius. I hope to show that the two strands of fiction have a common source, and that their union, or rather reunion, is due to deeper causes than any manifestation, however potent, of genius.

What has hitherto been overlooked, or all too insufficiently noted, is the standing association of the fairy world of mediæval romantic literature with Arthur. Chaucer, in a passage to which I have already alluded, proclaims this unhesitatingly:—

> "In the olde daies of the King Arthoure,
> Of which that Bretons speken grete honoure,
> Al was this land fulfild of fayerye;
> The elf-queen with hyr jolly companye
> Danced ful oft in many a greene mede."

We first meet the mediæval fairy in works of the Arthur cycle; as ladies of the lake and fountain, as dwellers in the far-off island paradise of Avalon, as mistresses of or captives in mysterious castles, the enchantments of which may be raised by the dauntless knight whose guerdon is their love and never-ending bliss, these fantastic beings play a most important part in the world of dream and magic haze peopled by Arthur and

his knights and their lady-loves. If an instance be needed how vital is the connection between Arthur and Faery, it is furnished by the romance of Huon of Bordeaux. As far as place and circumstance and personages are concerned, this romance belongs wholly to the Charlemagne cycle; in it Oberon makes his first appearance as king of Faery, and it is his *rôle* to protect and sustain the hero, Huon, with the ceaseless indefatigable indulgence which the supernatural counsellor so often displays towards his mortal protégé alike in heroic legend and in popular tale. He finally leaves him his kingdom; but before Huon can enjoy it Oberon must make peace between him and Arthur. "Sir, you know well that your realme and dignity you gave me after your decease," says the British king. In spite of the Carolingian setting, Huon of Bordeaux is at heart an Arthurian hero; and the teller of his fortunes knew full well that Arthur was the claimant to the throne of Faery, the rightful heir to the lord of fantasy and glamour and illusion.

Dismissing for a while consideration of the Arthurian fay, we may ask what is the Arthurian romance, and whence comes it? For ample discussion of these points I must refer to Nos. 1 and 4 of these Studies. To put it briefly, the Arthurian romance is the Norman-French and Anglo-Nor-

man re-telling of a mass of Celtic fairy tales, partly mythic, partly heroic in the shape under which they became known to the French-speaking world, tales which reached the latter alike from Brittany and from Wales in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Some of these fairy tales have come down to us in Welsh in a form entirely unaffected by French influence, others more or less affected, whilst some of the Welsh versions are simple translations from the French. The nearest analogues to these Welsh-Breton fairy tales, preserved to us partly in a Welsh, but mostly in a French dress, are to be found in Ireland. That country possesses a romantic literature which, so far as interest and antiquity of record are concerned, surpasses that of Wales, and which, in the majority of cases where comparison is possible, is obviously and undoubtedly more archaic in character. The relation between these two bodies of romantic fiction, Irish and Welsh, has not yet been satisfactorily determined. It seems most likely either that the Welsh tales represent the mythology and heroic legend of a Gaelic race akin to the Irish conquered by the Brythons (Welsh), but, as happens at times, passing their traditions on to their conquerors; or else that the Irish story-tellers, the dominant literary class in the Celtic world throughout the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries,

imposed their literature upon Wales. It is not necessary to discuss which of these two explanations has the most in its favour; in either case we must quit Britain and the woodland glades of Shakespeare's Arden and turn for a while to Ireland.

Examining the fairy belief of modern Ireland or of Gaelic Scotland, we detect at once a great similarity between it and English folklore, whether recoverable from living tradition or from the testimony of Shakespeare and other literature. Many stories and incidents are common to both, many traits and characteristics of the fairy folk are similar. This is especially the case if we rely upon Irish writers, like Crofton Croker, for instance, who were familiar with the English literary tradition, and may possibly have been influenced by it. But closer examination and reference to more genuinely popular sources reveal important differences. To cite one marked trait, the Irish fairies are by no means necessarily or universally regarded as minute in stature. Two thoroughly competent observers, one, Mr. Leland Duncan, working in North Ireland,[1] the other, Mr. Jeremiah Curtin, in South Ireland,[2] agree decisively as to this; fairy and mortal are

[1] *Folk-Lore*, June 1896.

[2] *Cf.* "Tales of the Fairies and of the Ghost World, collected from Oral Tradition in South-West Munster," London, 1895.

not thought of as differing in size. But what chiefly impresses the student of Irish fairy tradition is the fact that the fairy folk are far more definitely associated with special districts and localities and tribes and families than is the case in England.

We can detect among them a social organisation in many respects akin to that of mankind; we can draw up a map of fairy Ireland and say—Here rules this chieftain, there that chieftainess has sway—nay more, these potentates of the invisible realm are named; we are informed as to their alliances and relationships; we note that their territory and interests seem at times to tally with those of the great septs which represent the tribal organisation of ancient Ireland. O'Brien is not more definitely connected with Munster, O'Connor with Connaught, than is this or that fairy clan.

If we turn from tradition as still recoverable from the lips of the Irish-speaking population of to-day, and investigate the extremely rich store of romantic narratives which, preserved in Irish MSS. dating from 1100 A.D. to fifty years ago, represent an evolution of romance extending over fully 1000 years (for the oldest MSS. carry us back some 200 to 300 years from the date of their transcription), we meet the same supernatural personages as figure in contemporary

folklore, playing often the same part, endowed with traits and characteristics of a similar kind. Century by century we can trace them back, their attributes varying in detail, but the essence of their being persisting the same, until at last the very oldest texts present them under an aspect so obviously mythological that every unprejudiced and competent student of Irish tradition has recognised in them the dispossessed inmates of an Irish Pantheon. This mysterious race is known in Irish mythic literature as the Tuatha de Danann, the folk of the goddess Danu, and in some of the very oldest Irish tales, tales certainly 900, perhaps 1100 years old, they are designated by the same term applied to them by the Irish peasant of to-day, *aes sidhe*, the folk of the *sidhe* or fairy hillocks.

The tales in which this wizard race figures fall into two well-defined classes. By far the larger portion are heroic sagas, tales, that is, which describe and exalt the prowess, valour, and cunning of famous champions or chiefs. There are several well-defined cycles of heroic saga in Irish tradition, and their personages are assigned to periods centuries apart. Yet the Tuatha de Danann figure equally in the various cycles—chiefs and champions die and pass away, not they. Undying, unfading, masters and mistresses of inexhaustible delight, supreme in craft and counsel, they appear

again and again as opponents and protectors of mortal heroes, as wooers of mortal maidens, as lady-loves of valiant champions. The part they play in these sagas may be more or less prominent, but its character is always secondary; they exist in the story for the convenience of the mortal hero or heroine, to aid in the accomplishment of the humanly impossible, to act as a foil to mortal valour or beauty, to bestow upon mortal champions or princesses the boon of immortal love.

Such is, all too briefly sketched, the nature of this body of romantic fiction. Whoso is familiar with Arthurian romance detects at once an underlying similarity of conception, plot, and incident. In both, specially, does the woman of the immortal race stand before us in clearer outline and more vivid colouring than the man. Nor is the reason far to seek: the mortal hero is the centre of attraction; the love of the fairy maiden, who comes from her wonderland of eternal joys lured by his fame, is the most striking token and the highest guerdon of his prowess. To depict her in the most brilliant colours is the most effectual way to heighten his glory.

Both these bodies of romantic fiction, Irish and Arthurian, are in the main variations upon one set of themes—the love of immortal for mortal, the strife or friendly comradeship between hero and god or fairy.

If now we turn back to the living folk-belief of the Irish peasant after our survey of the mediæval romantic literature, we are seemingly at fault. The fairies are the lineal descendants of the Tuatha de Danann; name and attributes and story can be traced, and yet the outcome is so different. The Irish peasant belief of to-day is agricultural in its scope and intent, as is the English—the Irish fairies are bestowers of increase in flock and herd, protectors and fosterers of vegetation, jealous guardians of ancient country rites. In spite of identity of name and attribute, can these beings be really the same as the courtly, amorous wizard-knights and princesses of the romances? The difference is as great as between the Oberon and Puck of Shakespeare. And yet, as we have seen, the historical connection is undeniable; in Ireland the unity of the fairy world has never been lost sight of, as it has in England.

Hitherto I have brought before you stories in which the Tuatha de Danann play a subordinate part because the mortal hero or heroine has to be glorified. But there exists also a group of stories in which these beings are the sole actors, which are wholly concerned with their fortunes. We are in a position to demonstrate that these stories belong to a very early stratum of Irish mythic literature. After the introduction of Christianity into Ireland, the tales told of the Tuatha de

Danann, the old gods, seem to have considerably exercised the minds of the literary and priestly classes. They were too widely popular to be discarded—how then should they be dealt with? One way was to minimise the fantastic supernatural element and to present the residuum as the sober history of kings and heroes who had lived in the dim ages before Christ. This way was taken, and a large body of resulting literature has come down to us. But a certain number of fragmentary stories, and one long one, to which this minimising, rationalising process has been applied scarcely if at all, have also been preserved; and these must obviously be older than the rationalised versions. And as the latter can be traced back to the eighth and ninth centuries of our era, the former must belong to the earliest stages of Irish fiction.

Now if we examine these few remains of Irish mythology as contradistinguished from Irish heroic legend, we no longer find the Tuatha de Danann, as in the latter, figuring mainly as amorous wizards and love-lorn princesses whose chief occupation is to intrigue with or against some mortal hero or heroine—they come before us as the divine *dramatis personæ* of a series of myths the theme of which is largely the agricultural prosperity of Ireland; they are associated with the origin and regulation of agriculture, to them

are ascribed the institution of festivals and ceremonies which are certainly of an agricultural character. I cannot here give the evidence in any detail, but I may quote one or two instances. The mythology told of the struggles of the Tuatha de Danann against other clans of supernatural beings; in one of these struggles they overcome their adversaries and capture their king; about to be slain, he seeks to save his life; he offers that the kine of Ireland shall always be in milk, but this does not avail him; then that the men of Ireland should reap a harvest every quarter of the year, but his foes are inexorable; finally, he names the lucky days for ploughing and sowing and reaping, and for this he is spared. The mythology which relates the triumph of the Tuatha de Danann also chronicles their discomfiture at the hands of the sons of Mil; but even after these have established their sway over the whole of visible Ireland and driven the Tuatha de Danann into the shelter of the hollow hill, they still have to make terms with them. The chief of the Tuatha de Danann is the Dagda, and this is what an early story-teller says of him: "Great was the power of the Dagda over the sons of Mil, even after the conquest of Ireland; for his subjects destroyed their corn and milk, so that they must needs make a treaty of peace with the Dagda.

Not until then, and thanks to his goodwill, were they able to harvest corn and drink the milk of their cows."

There runs, moreover, throughout these stories a vein of rude and gross buffoonery which contrasts strongly with the character assigned to the Tuatha de Danann in the heroic sagas.

The true character of this mysterious race may now seem evident, and their substantial identity with the fairy of living peasant lore require no further demonstration. But I must quote one passage which shows that the ancient Irish not only possessed a mythology, but also an organised ritual, and that this ritual was of an agricultural sacrificial nature. A tradition, which is at least as old as the eighth century of our era, ascribes to Patrick the destruction of Cromm Cruaich and his twelve fellow-idols which stood on the plains of Mag Slecht. Here is what Irish mythic legend has to tell of the worship paid to the Cromm :—

"He was their god.

. . . . . .

To him without glory
They would kill their piteous wretched offspring,
With much wailing and peril,
To pour their blood around Cromm Cruaich.
Milk and corn
They would ask from him
In return for one-third of their healthy issue."

Such then are the Irish Tuatha de Danann, beings worshipped at the outset with bloody sacrifices in return for the increase of flock and herd and vegetable growth; associated in the oldest mythological tales with the origin and welfare of agriculture; figuring in the oldest heroic tales as lords of a wonderland of inexhaustible delights, unfading youth, and insatiable love; still the objects of peasant reverence and dread; called to this very day, as they were called centuries ago, and still retaining much of the hierarchical organisation and material equipment due to their incorporation in the higher imaginative literature of the race.

The chain of development which can be followed in Ireland can only be surmised in England; but the Irish analogy allows, I think, the conclusion that the fairy of English romance has the same origin as the Tuatha de Danann wizard hero or princess of Irish romance—in other words, the same ultimate origin as the elf or Puck of peasant belief. Oberon and Puck would thus be members of one clan of supernatural beings, and not arbitrarily associated by the genius of Shakespeare.

Here let me forestall a possible objection. Shakespeare's fairies are, it may be said, Teutonic, and only Celtic evidence has been adduced in favour of my thesis. I would answer that, so

far as the matter in hand is concerned, the antithesis of Celtic and Teutonic is an imaginary one. I use Celtic evidence because, owing to historical causes I shall touch upon presently, Celtic evidence alone is available. That evidence carries us back to a period long antedating the rise of Christianity; and at that period there was, I believe, substantial agreement between Teuton and Celt in their conception of the processes of nature and in the rites and practices by which the relations between man and nature were regulated. The fairy belief of the modern German peasant is closely akin to that of the modern Irish peasant, as indeed to that of the Slavonic or Southern peasant, not because one has borrowed from the other, but because all go back to a common creed expressing itself in similar ceremonies. The attempt to discriminate modern national characteristics in the older stratum of European folklore is not only idle but mischievous, because it is based upon the unscientific assumption that existing differences, which are the outcome of comparatively recent historical conditions, have always existed. I will only say that, possibly, the diminutive size of the fairy race belongs more especially to Teutonic tradition as developed within the last 2000 years, and that in so far the popular element in Shakespeare's fairy world may be Teutonic rather than Celtic.

No, the fairy creed the characteristics of which I have essayed to indicate, and which I have brought into organic connection with the oldest remains of Celtic mythology, was, I hold, common to all the Aryan-speaking people of Europe, to the ancestors of Greek and Roman and Slav, as well as to the ancestors of Celt and Teuton. I leave aside the question of its origin: the Aryans may, as some hold, have taken over and developed the ruder faith of the soil-tilling races whom they subjugated and upon whom they imposed their speech. I content myself with noting that it was the common faith of Aryan-speaking Europeans, and further, that Greeks and Celts have preserved its earliest forms, and have embodied it most largely in the completed fabric of their mythology. Let us hark back to Nash's parallel of elves and Robin Goodfellows with the fauns and satyrs of the fantastical world of Greece. The parallel is a valid and illuminating one, for the fauns and satyrs are of the train of Dionysus, and Dionysus in his oldest aspect is a divinity of growth, vegetable and animal, worshipped, placated, and strengthened for his task, upon the due performance of which depends the material welfare of mankind, by ritual sacrifice.

Dionysus was thus at first a god of much the same nature, and standing on the same plane

of development, as, by assumption, the Irish Tuatha de Danann. But in his case the accounts are at once fairly early and extensive, in theirs late and scanty. I have quoted, for instance, almost the only direct piece of information we have concerning the ritual of the Irish gods; that of the Greek god, on the other hand, which survived, in a modified and attenuated form, far down into historic times, is known to us in detail. It undoubtedly consisted originally in an act of sacrifice, animal or human, shared in by all the members of a community, who likewise shared the flesh of the victim, which was applied to invigorate alike the indwelling spirit of vegetation and the participating worshippers, who thus entered into communion with their god. The circumstances of these sacrificial rites were originally of savage horror, and the participants were wrought up to a pitch of the wildest frenzy in which they passed beyond the ordinary limits of sense and effort.

Greek evidence not only allows us to reconstitute this ancient ritual, shared in at one time by all Aryan-speaking Europeans; it also enables us to establish a psychological basis upon which the complex and often apparently inconsistent beliefs connected with the fairy world can be reared and built into an orderly structure of thought and imagination. The object of the

sacrifice is to reinforce the life alike of nature and of the worshipper; but this implies a conception, however crude, of unending and ever-changing vital essence persisting under the most diverse manifestations: hence the powers worshipped and appealed to, as they slowly crystallise into definite individualities, are necessarily immortal and as necessarily masters of all shapes —the fairy and his realm are unchanging and unfading, the fairy can assume all forms at will. Again, bestower of life and increase as he is, he must, by definition, be liberal and amorous—alike in romance and popular belief, the fairy clan is characterised by inexhaustible wealth and by an amiable readiness to woo and be wooed. The connection of the fairy world with the rites of rustic agriculture is so natural on this hypothesis as to need no further demonstration; but on any other hypothesis it is difficult if not impossible to explain.

I would only note that the practice of actual sacrifice has but recently become extinct, even if it be extinct; and where actually extinct it is represented by survivals, such as passing an animal through the smoke of the bonfire. I would also urge that the love of neatness and orderly method so characteristic of the fairy world is easily referable to a time when all the operations of rural life formed part of a definite religious ritual,

every jot and tittle of which must be carried out with minute precision. Similarly, the practice of carrying off human children has its roots in the conception of the fairy as the lord and giver of life. For, reasoned early man, life is not an inexhaustible product, the fairy must be fed as well as the mortal; hence the necessity for sacrifice, for renewing the stock of vitality which the fairy doled out to his devotee. But this source of supply might be insufficient, and the lords of life might, from the outset, be regarded as on the look-out for fresh supplies; or else, when the practice of sacrifice fell into disuse, the toll levied regularly in the old days upon human life might come to wear in the popular mind the aspect of raids upon human by an unhuman society.

Whilst many of the phenomena of fairydom thus find a reasonable—nay, inevitable—interpretation in the conceptions inherent to the cult, others are referable to the ritual in which it found expression. The participants in these rites met by night; by rapid motion prolonged to exhaustion, by the monotonous repetition of music maddening to the senses, by sudden change from the blackness of night to the fierce flare of torch and bonfire—in short, by all the accompaniments of the midnight worship which we know to have characterised the cult of Dionysus among the

mountains of Thrace, and which we may surmise to have characterised similar cults elsewhere, they provoked the god-possessed ecstasy in which Mænad and Bassarid, with senses exacerbated to insensibility, rent asunder the living victim and devoured his quivering flesh. The devotees were straightway justified in their faith; for in this state of ecstasy they became one with the object of their worship; his powers and attributes were theirs for the time; they passed to and were free of his wonderland, full of every delight that could allure and gratify their senses.

Have we not in rites such as these the source of tales found everywhere in the peasant fairy lore of Europe and represented with special vividness in Celtic folklore? At night the belated wanderer sees the fairy host dancing their rounds on many a green mead; allured by the strange enchantment of the scene he draws near, he enters the round. If he ever reappears, months, years, or even centuries have passed, seeming but minutes to him, so keen and all-absorbing has been the joy of that fairy-dance. But oftener he never returns, and is known to be living on in Faery, in the land of undeath and unalloyed bliss.

Here, if I am right, living tradition has preserved the memory of a cult which the Greek of two thousand years back held to be of immemorial antiquity. Historical mythology and current

tradition confirm and interpret each other. Yet it would, I think, be an error to regard the persistence and wide spread of the story as due solely to the impression made upon the popular mind by the fierce and dark rites of which it is an echo. Rather has it survived because it sums up in one vivid symbol so many aspects of the fairy world. It not only kept alive a memory, it satisfied a psychological demand.

Indeed, when an incident has become an organic portion of a myth—and to do this it must fulfil logical and psychological requirements which are none the less real because they differ from those which civilised men would frame—the connection persists so long as the myth retains a spark of life. We saw that the deities which were gradually elaborated out of the primitive spirits of vegetation are essentially amorous and endowed with the power of transformation or reincarnation. A vivid form of expressing this idea is to represent the god amorous of a mortal maiden, and father by her of a semi-divine son whose nature partakes of his own, and who is at times a simple incarnation of himself. What further contributed to the vogue and persistence of this incident was that it lent itself admirably to the purposes of heroic legend; the eponymous founder, the hero *par excellence* of a race, could

always be connected in this way with the clan of the immortals. We meet the incident at all stages of development. At times, as in the case of Arthur, or of Cuchulinn, son of the Irish Apollo-Dionysus, Lug, it has become wholly heroicised, and the semi-divine child has to conform to the heroic standard; at other times, as in the case of Merlin, or of Mongan, son of the Irish sea-god, Manannan mac Lir, the wonder-child manifests his divine origin by craft and guile rather than by strength and valour; in especial, he possesses the art of shape-shifting, which early man seems to have regarded as the most valuable attribute of godhead. We should not at first blush associate merry Puck with these semi-divine heroes and wizards. Yet consider the tract entitled *Robin Goodfellow; His Mad Pranks and Merry Jests, &c.*, the only known edition of which bears the date 1628; it has been much debated if it was composed before or after the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Mr. Chambers inclines to the latter opinion. In this tract, Robin Goodfellow is son of the fairy king by a maiden whom he came nightly to visit, "but early in the morning he would go his way, whither she knew not, he went so suddainly." Later, the son has a vision, in which he beholds the dances and hears the strains of fairyland, and when he awakes he

finds lying by his side a scroll, beginning with these words:

> "Robin, my only sonne and heire,"

in which the father promises, amongst other gifts:

> "Thou hast the power to change thy shape
> To horse, to hog, to dog, to ape;"

and assures him:

> "If thou observe my just command
> One day thou shalt see Fayry Land."

I believe that in this doggrel chapbook we have the worn-down form of the same incident found in the legends of Arthur and Merlin, of Cuchulinn and Mongan, told also in Greek mythology of no less a person than Dionysus, son of Zeus and Semele, the mischievous youth who, as we learn from the Homeric Hymn, amused himself in frightening Greek sailors by transformation tricks of much the same nature as those dear to Puck.

We may now revert to our starting-point, to the question why should the fairy world be specially prominent in English literature, a question which, if asked before, has doubtless been answered by unmeaning generalities about national temperament. But national temperament is the outcome of historic conditions and circumstances

which exist none the less though we cannot always trace them. In essaying an answer I will pick up the various dropped threads of the investigation and endeavour to weave them into one connected strand.

Mythology presupposes beliefs, and also rites in which those beliefs find practical expression. Rites comprise forms of words and symbolic acts. The form of words, the liturgic chant, may develop into a narrative, the symbolic act may require explanation and give rise to another narrative. As the intellectual and religious horizon of the worshipping race widens, these narratives are amplified, are differentiated, are enriched with new fancies and conceptions. In course of time the narratives crystallise around special divine beings; and as these latter develop and acquire fresh attributes, so their attendant narrative groups, their myths, may come to transcend the germ whence they have sprung, and to symbolise conceptions of such far wider scope as to obscure the connection between origin and completed growth. This happened in Greece with the Dionysus myths, but not until they had been noted at such a stage as to allow recognition of their true nature. Greek mythology in its later forms conquered Rome, entirely driving out the old Roman myths (many of which had probably progressed little beyond the agricultural stage),

although the religious conservatism of Rome maintained the rites themselves in an archaic form. Rome conquered Southern and much of Western Europe and imposed late Greek mythology in Latin dress upon these lands. But in Western Europe, Ireland wholly, and Britain partly, escaped Roman influence. Celtic mythology, starting from the same basis as Greek Dionysus mythology, was left at liberty to develop upon its own lines. The Greek Dionysiac myths, expanding with the marvellous expansion of the Hellenic genius, grew away from their primitive rustic basis, and connection was broken between the peasant creed and the highest imaginative literature. Celtic mythology developed likewise, but to an extent as far less as the Celt had lagged behind the Greek in the race of civilisation. The old Irish gods, themselves an outcome of the primitive agricultural creed, were worked into the heroic legends of the race, and suffered transformation into the wizard champions and enchantresses of the romances, but they never lost touch with their earliest forms; the link between the fairy of the peasant and the fairy of literature (for heroic saga *is* literature although traditional literature) was never wholly snapped; and when the time came for the highest imagination of mankind to turn to the old pre-Christian world for inspiration, in these islands alone was there a literary conven-

tion which still led back to the wealth of incident and symbol preserved by the folk. In these islands alone, I say, and why? Because the Arthurian romance, that form of imaginative literature which revealed Celtic mythology to the world, although it entered English literature later than it did that of France or Germany, although France first gave it to all mankind, and Germany bestowed upon it its noblest mediæval form, yet was at home here, whilst on the Continent it was an alien. When the destined hour struck, and the slumbering princess of Faery should awake, it was the youngest quester who gave the releasing kiss and won her to be his bride; if we seek their offspring, we may find it in the English poetry of the last three centuries.

When the destined hour had struck! for the princess might not be roused from her slumber before the appointed time. We all know the sixteenth century as the age of Renaissance and Reformation. But what precisely is implied by these words? For over a thousand years the compromise come to between Christianity and the pre-Christian world had subsisted, subject, as are all things, to fluctuation and modification, but retaining substantially its outline and animating spirit. At last it yielded before the onslaught of two different forces—one, sympathetic knowledge of the pre-Christian classic world, resulting in the

Renaissance, and the other, desire to revert to the earliest form of Christianity before the latter had effected its compromise with classic civilisation, resulting in the Reformation. The men who had passed through the impact of these forces upon their hearts and brains could no longer look upon the pre-Christian world, under whatever form it appeared to them, with the same eyes as the men of the Middle Ages. It stimulated their curiosity, it touched their imagination, it was fraught to them with problems and possibilities their predecessors never dreamt of. Throughout the literature of the sixteenth century we may note the same pre-occupation with romantic themes which are older than, and outside, Christianity. In Italy, as was but natural, the purely classic side of the revival predominated, and the romantic poems of Pulci, Berni, and Ariosto are only brilliant examples of conscious literary art; in France, peasant folklore and romance formed the groundwork of the great realistic burlesque in which the chief master of French prose satirised the society of his day and sketched the society of his dreams; in Germany, no supreme literary genius arose to voice the tendency of the age, but there was developed the last of the great impersonal legends of the world, the story of Faustus, ready to the hands of Germany's master-poet when he should come, and reminding us that wizard-

craft has the same ultimate origin as, and is but the unholy and malign side of, the fairy belief. In England, where Celtic mythology had lived on as the Arthurian romance, where the latter, although a late comer, was at home, where alone literature had not been wholly divorced from folk-belief, Shakespeare created his fairy world.

Since his days, fairydom has become, chiefly owing to the perfection of his embodiment, a mere literary convention, and has gradually lost life and savour. Instead of the simpering puppets —stock properties of a machine-made children's literature—to which the fairies have been degraded, I have endeavoured to show them as they really appeared to the men and women who believed in them,—beings of ancient and awful aspect, elemental powers, mighty, capricious, cruel, and benignant, as is Nature herself. I believe that the fairy creed, this ancient source of inspiration, of symbolic interpretation of man's relation to nature, is not yet dried up, and that English literature, with its mixed strain of Teutonic and Celtic blood, with its share in the mythologies of both these races, and in especial with its claim to the sole body of mythology and romance, the Celtic, which grew up wholly unaffected by classic culture, is destined to drink deeply of it in the future as in the past, and to find in it the material for new creations of undying beauty.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

THERE are only two good accounts of the fairy belief, studied as a whole and with a view to determining its origin, nature, and growth:—(1) The essay prefixed to *Irische Elfenmärchen*, a translation by the Brothers Grimm of Crofton Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, published at Berlin in 1826. Croker translated this essay into English and affixed it to the second edition of his *Legends* (1827–28), where it occupies pages 1–154 of vol. iii. (2) *Les Fées du Moyen Age, recherches sur leur origine, leur histoire et leurs attributs*, by Alfred Maury, Paris, 1843; reprinted, Paris, 1896, in the volume entitled *Croyances et Legendes du Moyen Age* (12 francs). The Grimms' essay is, like all their work, absolutely good as far as it goes, and only needs amplification in the light of the fuller knowledge derived from the researches of the last seventy-five years. Halliwell's *Illustrations of Shakespeare's Fairy Mythology* (London, 1845; reprinted with additions by Hazlitt, 1875) is a useful collection of materials. The best edition of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, as far as the objects of this study are concerned, is that by Mr. E. K. Chambers, 1897. An immense amount of out-of-the-way material is gathered together in *Shakespeare's Puck and his Folklore illustrated from the superstitions of all nations, but more especially from the earliest religion and rites of Northern Europe and the Wends*, 3 vols., 1852, by Mr. Bell; but the writer's perverse fantasticality and his utter lack of true critical spirit make his work dangerous for any but a trained scholar. Mr. Hartland's *The Science of Fairy Tales; an Inquiry into Fairy Mythology*, 1891 (3s. 6d.), is a most valuable study of several fundamental themes of fairy romance as exemplified in traditional literature. Dyer's *Folklore of Shakespeare*, 1884 (14s.), must also be mentioned, but cannot be recommended.

REGINALD SCOT'S "DISCOVERY OF WITCHCRAFT" (page 10),

originally published 1584, is accessible in Nicholson's reprint, 1886 (£2, 5s.).

The quotation from Nash is taken from Halliwell's *Illustrations*.

### Shakespeare and Legend (page 11).

Shakespeare's three greatest tragedies—Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth—are all founded upon heroic-legendary themes, and in each case the vital element in the legend is disentangled and emphasised with unerring skill. Indeed, wherever he handles legendary romance, he obtains the maximum of artistic effect without, as the artist so frequently does, offering violence to the spirit of the legend.

### Gervase of Tilbury and Gerald the Welshman (page 11).

Compare Mr. Hartland's *Science of Fairy Tales* (ch. vi.), "Robberies from Fairyland." Gervase's *Otia Imperialia*, a mine of wealth to the student of mediæval folklore, is accessible in Liebrecht's admirable edition, 1856 (about 12s. 6d.).

### Fairydom and the Arthurian Romance (page 12).

Compare Nos. 1 and 4 of the present series of *Popular Studies.*

### Gaelic Fairy Lore (page 15).

No really good general survey of the subject exists, save the Grimms' essay already mentioned. This was substantially based upon the information brought together by Crofton Croker in the work quoted above; by Mrs. Grant, *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland*, 2 vols., 1811; and by Sir Walter Scott in his *Demonology and Witchcraft*, 1831, and *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 4 vols., 1802–03. Since then, a considerable amount of Irish material has been brought together by Carleton (*Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, 1830–32), by Lady Wilde (*Ancient Legends, Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland*, 1887 (6s.)), by P. Kennedy, *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*, 1866, reprinted 1891 (3s. 6d.), and *Fireside Stories of Ireland*, 1871, chiefly with a view to illustrating the tales and legends collected by them. Mr. Curtin's *Tales of the Fairies and of the Ghost World*, 1893 (3s. 6d.), is more directly illustrative of the fairy belief as such, and is most valuable. Mr. Yeats' article

in the *Nineteenth Century* (Jan. 1898, *Prisoners of the Gods*) and the *Contemporary Review* (Sept. 1899, *Ireland Bewitched*) deserve the closest attention, though it may be thought that he sometimes reads into the information he has collected a poetic significance it does not really possess. Mr. Leland Duncan's article in *Folklore* (June 1896, *Fairy Beliefs from County Leitrim*) is of great value, and the *Transactions* generally of the Folklore Society are full of material.

In Scotland, Campbell of Islay's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, 4 vols., 1860–62, reprinted 1893, are of course indispensable. Vols. i.–v. of *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition*, especially vols. i. and v., contain much fairy lore. The oldest and perhaps most valuable account of the Scotch Gaelic fairy world, the Rev. Robert Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies*, written in 1696, has been printed by Mr. Lang, with an admirable Introduction, 1893 (7s. 6d.). Martin's *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, written 1695, reprinted 1884, may likewise be consulted.

THE TUATHA DE DANANN (pages 16–73).

For a full development, with citation and discussion of authorities, of the argument set forth in these four pages, *cf.* my *Voyage of Bran* (ch. xvii.).

THE AGRICULTURAL BASE OF FAIRY LORE (pages 25–29).

These pages are practically a summary of Chaps. xvi.–xviii. of the *Voyage of Bran*, to which I refer for a full presentment of the theories here urged.

ROBIN GOODFELLOW, &c. (page 31).

Reprinted in Halliwell-Hazlitt's *Illustrations of Shakespeare's Fairy Mythology*.

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# MYTHOLOGY AND FOLKTALES:

## THEIR RELATION AND THEIR INTERPRETATION.

In a little book, often talked about but not often read, on *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, by Francis Bacon, there is a noble passage which runs thus:—

"Above all things this prevails most with me, and is of singular moment—that many of these fables seem not to be invented of those by whom they are related and celebrated, as by Homer, Hesiod, and others: for if it were so that they took beginning in that age and from those authors by whom they are delivered and brought to our hands, my mind gives me there could be no great or high matter expected or supposed to proceed from them in respect of these originals. But if with attention we consider the matter, it will appear that they were delivered and related as things formerly believed and received, and not as newly invented and offered unto us. Besides, seeing they are diversely related by writers that lived near about one and the self-same time, we

may easily perceive that they were common things, derived from precedent memorials, and that they became various by reason of the diverse ornaments bestowed on them by particular relations. And the consideration of this must needs increase in us a great opinion of them, as not to be accounted either the effects of the times or inventions of the poets, but as sacred relics or abstracted airs of better times, which by tradition from more ancient nations fell into the trumpets and flutes of the Greeks."

So the great thinker puts the argument for the traditional origin of the mythological tales he is about to expound as philosophical, moral, and political apologues. Since his day we have learnt that stories of the same general characteristics as those of the Greeks are known to almost all nations throughout the world. The Zulus and the Maoris, for example, who had no system of writing, tell stories which, if we make allowance for difference of customs and environment, are startling in their likeness to some of the classical stories. In fact, of all human accomplishments, perhaps the most persistent and the most widely diffused is the art of telling tales. Among peoples to whom books and newspapers are unknown, the telling of tales is the only method of transmitting the memory of the past, and it occupies a large part of their leisure hours. As an example take

the Bantu tribes of South Africa. "When men gather round the hut-fire in the evening, the story-teller is always in requisition. He may relate his own exploits, his deeds of daring, his loves, his thefts, and feats of strength or endurance, and from these wander into a region of fable or legend to wile the weary hours away. With some, story-telling is reduced to one of the fine arts—I had almost said exact sciences."[1] What is true of the Bantu is equally true of the Eskimo. In the long winter nights around the shores of Hudson's Bay, or during inclement weather when they cannot venture out, they sit in the hut, and the old men relate what they have seen and heard. They have a great stock of stories; and "the old women relate the history of the people of former days, depending entirely on memory, often interspersed with recitations apparently foreign to the thread of the legend. The younger members sit with staring eyes and countenances which show their wondering interest in the narration. Far into the night the droning tone of [the speaker's] voice continues reciting the events of the past, until one by one the listeners drowsily drop to sleep in the position they last assumed."[2] Turning to a higher grade of civilisa-

[1] Rev. James Macdonald, in *Folklore*, vol. iii. p. 352.

[2] *Eleventh Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, Washington, 1897, pp. 260, 327.

tion, we find similar examples in our own country. Gervase of Tilbury, Marshal of the kingdom of Arles, was an Englishman who, early in the thirteenth century, wrote a miscellaneous work under the name of *Otia Imperialia* to amuse the vacant hours of the Emperor Otho IV. He records that it was the custom in England for the family of a rich man to gather round the fire after supper that they might spend their leisure in recounting the deeds of the ancients and in listening. On one such occasion a guest was present, and in the course of the evening the people of the place related a wonder said to occur at or near Cambridge. There, on a hill called Wandlebury, seems to have been a prehistoric camp. If after nightfall, when the moon was shining, an armed man, entering alone within the rampart, were to exclaim "Let a knight come against a knight!" it was said that instantly a horseman would prick forth against him, and one or the other would be hurled to the ground. The guest was fired with the wish to go and try his luck, but how he succeeded does not now concern us.[1] What does concern us is the wide interpretation put on "the deeds of the ancients." The custom, it is clear, was one of telling marvellous tales to which more or less credence was attached. This is a custom

[1] Gerv. Tilb., Dec. 3, c. 59. The story was copied into the *Gesta Romanorum*, c. 155.

which would be very hard to kill. While books were none or rare, it would be among the chief amusements of the castle as well as of the cottage; and among the peasantry in remote country districts, even in this island, it is hardly yet unknown. At all events, long since the beginning of the century now passing away, in Wales and in Scotland gatherings of neighbours at one another's firesides on winter evenings to hear and to tell old tales were very common; and I need hardly say that the testimony of observers in all parts of Europe is the same.

I have referred to the stories thus told as betraying the same general characteristics as the mythological tales of the ancient Greeks. Everywhere they deal in wonders. Everywhere they deal with personages having powers that we in a higher level of education recognise as beyond human. Everywhere they tell us of monsters which make war, sometimes habitually, sometimes in desultory fashion, upon mankind. And the lower we go in civilisation the more frequently we find incidents indicating a morality and customs different from ours. The problem Bacon sets himself to solve is—what do they mean? "In such tales as are probable," he says, "they may seem to be invented for delight and in imitation of history. And as for such as no man would so much as imagine or relate, they seem to be sought

out for other ends." Concerning these, he is "inclined to imagine that, under some of the ancient fictions, lay couched certain mysteries and allegories, even from their first invention." And he is persuaded "that no man can constantly deny but this sense was in the authors' intent and meaning when they first invented them, and that they purposely shadowed it in this sort."

In Bacon's time there was much to be said for the solution he propounds. With our extended knowledge of the world, however, it has long since become unsatisfactory. We have learnt "that allegories are always adventitiously, and, as it were, by constraint, never naturally and properly, included in fables" (that is to say, in these traditional tales)—a contention he describes as "lumpish and almost leaden." What is of still more importance, we have discovered that, if you want to know the meaning of anything whatever, you must go back to its origin. Lastly, Bacon himself has put into our hands an instrument of philosophical inquiry keener and more potent than any that was known before: the method of induction. He had not the means of applying this method to the Greek fables, or it would have led him to very different results.

There are, no doubt, many traditional stories which may be read as allegories of one kind or another. The dangers of navigation between

Scylla and Charybdis, and the misfortune of Icarus, who, soaring too high on artificial wings, exposed the wax wherewith they were joined to be melted by the sun, and so fell into the sea and was drowned, may undoubtedly be made to point out the virtue of moderation. Atalanta may be interpreted as art which "is far more swift than nature, more speedy in pace, and sooner attains the end it aims at," if not enticed out of the way by the golden apples of gain. The vicissitudes of Jove in his combat with Typhon may be twisted to signify "the variable fortune of princes and the rebellious insurrection of traitors in a state." What is wanted, however, is any vestige of proof that the interpretation desired is that which was intended; and we need only glance through Bacon's little book to satisfy ourselves how hard he is often driven to find a reasonable (as we account reasonable) meaning for his parables. It is apt to cause us astonishment to find that "Prometheus doth clearly and eminently signify Providence," and that Diomedes, who did not hesitate to encounter and wound Venus in one of the battles on the plain of Troy, and who was afterwards, when he fled into Italy, murdered by his host, King Daunus, represents that zeal which would "endeavour to reform and convince any sect of religion (though vain, corrupt and infamous, shadowed by the person of Venus), not by force

of argument and doctrine and holiness of life, and by the weight of examples and authority, but labour to extirpate and root it out by fire and sword and tortures," yet comes at last to a miserable end.

The mediæval monks who compiled the *Gesta Romanorum* were perhaps the cleverest of men in twisting a moral out of the unlikeliest stories. One of their parables relates to a youth who was captured by pirates. His father refused to redeem him. The pirate, who had him in chains, had a daughter, who, on the youth's promise to marry her, set him free and fled with him to his own home. His father then forbade him to marry the maiden, alleging that she had deceived her own father and liberated him for the gratification of her passions, and therefore ought not to be trusted. A spirited retort by the lady, however, procured his consent; her lover married her with great pomp, and lived happy ever after. Here, it seems, the youth taken by pirates typifies the whole human race taken captive by the devil through the sin of our first parents; the father who would not redeem him is the world; the pirate's daughter is the Second Person of the Trinity, who had pity on the human race, and, after his Passion, descended into hell and freed mankind from the chains of the devil![1] He

1 Oesterley, *Gesta Rom.*, Berlin, 1872, Tale v. p. 278. The English *Gesta* makes a little better sense. Herrtage, Tale vii. p. 306.

who would surpass this feat in exposition would be an ingenious man.

On the other hand, there are many stories, like that of Puss in Boots, out of which it would puzzle even the compilers of the *Gesta* to extract a moral. This at least is true of the story as it is known to us from Perrault, and in most other versions of the West of Europe. There are versions elsewhere in which a moral may be found; but again we are "lumpish and almost leaden" enough to come back to the question whether the moral was really intended. This cannot be decided without first ascertaining which version of the story was the original, and which of them are derivative and corrupted. In the valley of the Ganges the tale is told without a moral; in Cashmere it has a moral. In Mongolia it has the same moral as in Cashmere, that of kindness to animals; in Zanzibar it has another moral, that of the danger of ingratitude. In Italy sometimes it has a moral, sometimes none. But as for any allegory, not a trace is to be found, in whatever version of the story you look for it. A similar perplexity meets us when we find a story expounded as an allegory in two different ways. Bacon, as we saw, interpreted Atalanta of art enticed from its proper course by gain. The monks, however, had another explanation. For them Atalanta is "the soul of man,

with whom many devils desire to run and to deceive her through their temptations;" and the three golden balls are the desire of the flesh, pride, and covetousness.[1] The wisdom that could only be expressed in this blundering, ambiguous fashion must have been perilously nigh unto folly.

This method of explaining the mythological tales was much older than even the *Gesta Romanorum*. Educated Greeks, as they advanced in culture, became as fully sensible as ourselves of the irrational and immoral character of their gods, as they were known in the sacred legends. The philosophers endeavoured to explain them in various ways. Beginning with Theagenes, towards the end of the sixth century before Christ, many treated them as allegories, either physical or ethical, in order to reconcile them with growing knowledge and refinement. Socrates, however, led a new departure, that of expounding the names as etymological blunders and corruptions. He indeed made the suggestion as a means of evading difficulties which arose in allegorising the stories. With wider knowledge than fell to the share of any Greek, it has been, during the present century, elaborated and applied to a different end. Philologists, learned in

[1] Herrtage, *Gesta*, London, Early English Text Society, 1879, p. 430. See also Tale xxxii. p. 125.

Sanskrit, the language of the classical writings of India, having discovered that Greek was a sister-tongue, and that Greek and Sanskrit, with Persian, Armenian, Latin, and the various Celtic, Lettic, Slav, and Teutonic languages, formed one great family of speech, proceeded to postulate an Aryan race, which once upon a time had spoken it in some unknown original home, and to piece together its mythology. Since the *Rig-Veda*, the most ancient sacred book of India, was at the same time the most ancient monument of Aryan literature, they resorted to it for the key to mythology. They found the key, as they thought, in the names and epithets of the gods invoked in the hymns of which the *Rig-Veda* is composed. They soon formed a list of equivalent names, whereof, be it noted, some are undoubted, while others are still no more than ingenious guesses. Thus, Agni is equated with *ignis*, fire; the Greek Zeus, the Latin Jupiter, the German Tiw (who survives in our Tuesday), are declared to be Dyaus, the sky; Daphne, the maiden persecuted by Apollo's unwelcome attentions and changed into the laurel, is traced to a Sanskrit word, *dahanâ* or *ahanâ*, and is interpreted as the dawn pursued by the rising sun. The *Rig-Veda* is poetry, the product of a comparatively advanced civilisation. The poets to whom we are indebted for it used highly metaphorical expressions, and

addressed now one, now another, deity in the most hyperbolical and passionate language. This the philologists mistook for the every-day speech of the primitive hypothetical Aryan people, and attributed the birth of gods and the growth of stories about them to the decay of imagination among the descendants of the folk who had habitually indulged in this "tall talk," and their forgetfulness and corruption of the primeval meaning of the words and phrases used by their ancestors.

The home of the Philological School was Germany, where its interpretations were almost universally accepted. It became popular in England during the sixties, owing to the writings of Professor Max Müller. Its methods, however, were soon discovered to be little less subjective than those of the Allegorical School. This discovery, hastened by the divergences of interpretation among its exponents, and the tendency to interpret every story as a sun-myth, speedily produced a reaction. The way was prepared by the researches of Dr. Tylor, who extended his survey of the field of mythology into regions ignored by the philologists. But the first direct attack was delivered in Germany by Mannhardt, previously an adherent, who in 1875 published the result of his inquiries into Tree-worship among the Germans and neighbouring peoples,

as the first part of a work entitled *Wald- und Feldkulte*. In this volume, and its successor on the Tree-worship of the ancients, he boldly set aside the current philological interpretations, and examined the mythological stories in connection with custom and belief. Mannhardt died prematurely in 1880; but the impetus he had given to the really fruitful study of tale and custom acquired fresh momentum from the studies of younger men. In 1887, after some preliminary essays and an article on mythology in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Mr. Andrew Lang gave the finishing stroke to the philological method by the wit, learning, and logical vigour of his book on *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*.

The philological method thus gave way to what may be called the anthropological method of interpreting folktales. The principles governing the anthropological method are those which guide every truly scientific inquiry. The anthropological method is, in fact, the application of induction to folktales. Its groundwork is as wide a collection of facts as possible; for the wider the collection of relevant facts, the surer, of course, is likely to be the induction. It is only during the last half-century that a sufficient store of tales has been accumulated in books, and a sufficient knowledge of customs and superstitions in various parts of the world has been made available

to students for anything like a safe induction. These tales, customs, and superstitions were inaccessible to the ancient philosophers. They were inaccessible to Bacon. To a large extent they were inaccessible to Grimm, though to Grimm we are indebted for first discerning the importance of folktales, and for inaugurating their systematic collection and comparison. He did not, it is true, directly connect them with the collection and comparison of customs and superstitions. Yet the point of view he occupied was wholly different from Bacon's; and in the notes to his *Kinder- und Hausmürchen*, written in his old age and published just fifty years ago, he is obviously on his way to discoveries of the kind afterwards made by Mannhardt and his followers.

The study of man, his physical, mental, and moral characteristics and conditions, is one of modern growth. It is part of the general scientific inquisitiveness which is so marked a feature of the nineteenth century; and it has been greatly aided by political circumstances and the missionary zeal of more than one Christian church. To govern a subject people properly, it is necessary to understand them. Effectively to teach a savage people the elements of a higher religion and a higher morality, to impose upon barbarians the laws of a higher civilisation, you must first penetrate their modes

of thought, you must learn how they regard themselves and the external world. Here it is that the collection and comparison of folklore comes in; for, as we have no direct access to the minds of other people, we can only know them by their products. Now, folktales are one branch of folklore; and in them we may find reflected the beliefs and customs of the people who tell them. This is, of course, especially the case with stories believed to be true. Thus, a Maori tradition of the settlement of the islands of New Zealand relates that a chief, named Wheketoro, brought certain reptiles and put them on an island, which he made *tabu* (sacred) to save them from the plundering propensity of man. Another chief, named Kaiawa, resolved to remove the *tabu*, and for that purpose went over to the island with his daughter. She was required to hold steady the wood which her father would use to procure fire by friction, and to represent the female gods in the ceremony. But he forgot to veil the maiden's eyes, as is the custom when strangers or females are near sacred places. They saw there a certain dog called Moho-rangi, which stared at her with a fixed gaze. Two pairs of birds had been left by Wheketoro in charge of the island. After the sacred fires had been kindled, Kaiawa fumigated one pair of these birds until they sneezed, which made them quite tame. This done, he tried to

fumigate the other pair, but they flew away, and they and their offspring have been wild and shy of man ever since. Then he returned to seek his daughter. She had disappeared. Raising his eyes, he looked out on the sea, and beheld her turned into a rock standing in the ocean. To this day women will not go to that island, lest the maiden's fate be theirs, or they be killed by stones falling from the cliffs; and strangers who go there never neglect to cover their eyes, to prevent their seeing the dog Moho-rangi.[1] This story is regarded as a literal piece of history. Wheketoro is not the night, nor is Kaiawa the dawn or the sun. Every incident of the narrative reflects some superstition or some custom well known to the story-teller; and it is intelligible only in connection with these beliefs and customs.

Stories told for amusement preserve similar records of the mental condition of those who relate them. Here, however, it is somewhat less easy to read the records, because the tales containing them may have travelled far from their place of origin. Tales pass rapidly from mouth to mouth. Some of them may never have been believed as narratives of fact. They may have been told at the outset for mere amusement, or

[1] White, *Ancient History of the Maori*, vol. ii., Wellington, 1889, pp. 189, 192.

they may have originated in that twilight habit of the mind familiar to humanity which does not attempt accurately to distinguish what is meant to be believed from what is meant to do no more than pass the time. In any case, it is safe to say that they must have embodied what those who first told and those who first heard them regarded as probabilities. Had they been the wild impossibilities to their original audience which they are to us, they would never have conciliated the favour of mankind. Nay, they would have been, to use Bacon's expression, "such as no man would so much as imagine or relate."

Let us, as an example, take the story of Cinderella. As usually told to children in England, the story of Cinderella is a translation from the French of Perrault, who, in the last years of the seventeenth century, published this among other *Contes de ma Mère l'Oye,* in the name of his little boy. The child, indeed, had, as Mr. Andrew Lang conjectures with probability, some share in the authorship. The tales so published may well have been written down by him under his father's encouragement as a childish exercise, from his memory of his nurse's recital, and have been touched up by Perrault. Be this as it may, the tales were soon done into English. In chapbook form their popularity has continued down to the present hour, and has been one of the most potent

of the various forces which have combined to drive from the field many of our native nursery-tales. We probably had a Cinderella story. It has been found in Ireland and abundantly in Scotland. But, though allied forms have been found in England, no example exactly of the Cinderella type has been recovered. The chapbook version of Perrault's tale has destroyed it for ever.

Perrault's Cinderella (with perhaps a little manipulation) represents the story, then, as told somewhere in France in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Like other folktales, it is of ancient and unknown date. Like other folktales, too, it has been handed down from more barbarous times, and has been adapted to a state of society slowly changing and to manners becoming more and more civilised. The *deus ex machinâ* is, it will be remembered, a fairy godmother (*sa Maraine qui estoit Fée*). A godmother was, of course, a good-natured familiar in all ranks of French society; and the peasants at least, among whom the tale was at home, believed with full assurance in the existence of fairies, and in the possibility of their entering into relations with mankind. But in this form the beneficent power is a transformation from a much more barbarous original to suit French peasant views of probability. I have not space here for the comparison on which a real induction can be

founded; all I can do is to refer to one or two striking examples. Turning then to the Scottish tale of Rashin Coatie, we find the beneficent fairy in the shape of a red calf bequeathed to the heroine by her dying mother. The stepmother causes the calf to be killed, but by the dead animal's directions Rashin Coatie buries its bones under a certain grey stone. Afterwards, whenever she wants anything, she goes to the grey stone and gets it from the red calf, together with all needful instructions.[1] In the tale of The Wonderful Birch from Russian Carelia we get a step farther. There a witch-wife changes the heroine's mother into a black sheep and takes her place. Then the false mother (the witch-wife) orders the sheep to be slaughtered. Warned by the sheep, the heroine does not partake of its flesh, but gathers and buries its bones. Out of the grave grows a wonderful birch-tree, and from the tree and the grave the heroine gets help and counsel.[2] In this tale it is clear that, as Mr. Lang remarks, the sheep and the tree are but the mother surviving in those two forms. A Scottish tale from Inverness-shire is yet more savage in its character. There the heroine's mother is *from the first* a sheep, though a sheep

[1] *Folklore*, vol. i. p. 289.

[2] *Finnische Märchen*, übersetzt von Emmy Schreck, Weimar, 1887, p. 63, Story No. 9.

of magical power. After she is slain and her bones buried by her daughter's pious care she does nothing, until, at the end of a certain period, she revives as a beautiful princess and clothes her daughter for the feast at which the king's son is to fall in love with her.[1]

The last two stories must have originated at a time when shape and species were not considered necessary to personal identity. No one who knows anything of savage beliefs needs to be told that in certain low stages of civilisation the power of shape-shifting is one of the most common attributes not merely of supernatural beings and of professional wizards, but of ordinary human beings. A man may be quite conscious that he cannot change his own form at his own will, yet at the same time he may firmly believe that other men can, and that they can change his form too. It is, therefore, impossible to know for certain that any beast, or tree, or stone, or, in fact, any object of external nature, is not a disguised man or woman. If it be not so already, it may become a man or woman by this power of shape-shifting. Moreover, the savage endows every object with his own consciousness, and holds that it acts from motives which are the analogues of his own. He speaks of the lower animals, for example, as if they were human

[1] *Cinderella*, by Marian Roalfe Cox, p. 534.

beings; and thereby he often perplexes more civilised listeners, who cannot make out whether in his stories the actors are human or not. To him it is a matter of indifference, as in either case they would act in precisely the same way; and probably he does not know, or care to define, the exact category in the scale of being to which they belong. In our stage of civilisation this attitude of mind towards the lower animals and other objects only survives in the make-believe of apologues, and of stories handed down to us from elder times—play-stories to us, but to our remote ancestors very real and serious.

One consequence of it is that the repugnance with which we should listen to a story, if seriously told, of the marriage of a man or woman with a beast or a bird, is wanting in the savage mind. A Nîsqa of British Columbia, doubtless, would not contemplate the possibility of such unions among his contemporaries. Nevertheless, he believes that a maiden of his own people was once carried off and wedded by an owl, to whom one of the clans thus traces its paternity. In the Carelian and the two Scottish stories we have just examined we have a descending scale going back into savagery no higher than this; and if we reverse the order, we shall see the steps by which the tale rose to the level on which we find it in Perrault's collection. In the lowest stage

the man has a child by a sheep. Here the Inverness peasant has preserved what for our present purpose is the oldest form of the story—a form which would not revolt, but would be perfectly credible to, a Nîsqa. The Carelian tale must have once been similar. As handed down to us, however, the heroine's mother is only changed into a sheep at a later moment, and by the machinations of a witch-wife, who takes her place and shape. Those who tell it have modified the savage feature which has, by their advance in civilisation, become repulsive, and only retain the belief in metamorphosis which, though equally savage, is less objectionable on moral grounds, and, it may be, less incredible.[1] This is the second stage. In the other Scottish tale the metamorphosis has vanished also. The red calf is no longer identified with the mother herself. It is only bequeathed by her, and there is nothing to show that it has ever been anything else than a red calf. Still its magical powers are kept: it speaks from the grave and bestows wonderful gifts. This is the third stage. Lastly, we come to Perrault and the seventeenth-century French peasant. In this tale the mother becomes a god-

[1] I do not, of course, suggest that the union of man and sheep is less repugnant to the Scottish peasant now, but only that, for some reason at present unknown, a more archaic version of the tale has been preserved in Inverness.

mother. Inasmuch as it is necessary for her to perform wonders, and human godmothers, however kindly intentioned, cannot do that, she is presented as a fairy; for the fairy has retained magical powers which have ceased to be ascribed to any human being. These powers are still seriously ascribed to the fairy people by the peasantry of all the West of Europe; and in the play-stories of every civilised nation they survive to record a portion of the beliefs once vigorous and active among all classes, but now relegated to those who are ignorant and out of the way.

If we look at the classical myths, we find the same phenomenon. Zeus under many forms, a bull, a swan, a shower of gold, unites himself to various heroines. The nymph Callisto shares his favours, and he changes her into a she-bear, who is recognised as the mother by him of the Arcadian folk. In these and other tales we have late and refined forms of beliefs, in their origin as savage as that of the Nîsqa. By comparing tales from other parts of the world, of which Cinderella is one, it is abundantly clear that the bull-manifestation or the swan-manifestation of the great god Zeus was once a literal bull or swan, and that Callisto was once a literal bear. An advance in culture rendered that crude belief both repulsive and incredible. The higher polytheism grew up, and provided a temporary evasion of the difficulty

by identifying such events with adventures of the gods. Thus the tales were shorn of half their grossness, but they remain relics and undeniable witnesses of the savagery out of which the Greeks had emerged at the dawn of history. In the process many of them received a garniture of beauty such as none but the Greeks, with their unrivalled artistic genius, could have conferred.

Nor do the tales of Greek mythology confess their savage origin merely by their general character. There is, in fact, hardly one incident in them that has not its parallel in the myths of existing savages. The resemblance is not confined to Zulu and Maori stories. It extends over the whole savage world. The adventure of Phaethon is found among the Kwakiutl of British Columbia. Phaethon, driving recklessly or weakly the chariot of his father the sun, came so near to the earth that he almost set it on fire; and to save the world, Zeus, with a flash of his lightning, slew the youth. The Kwakiutl tell that the minx was the sun's son. Climbing up to heaven, he was intrusted by his father with his nose- and ear-jewels, which gave light to the world, and sent to bear them across the sky, that their true owner might rest. The father impressed upon him to be careful and not go too near the earth, lest he set it on fire. All went well until noon. Then the minx became impatient, thrust the clouds out

of the way, and hurriedly started to run. The earth speedily became so hot that the rocks burst and the water began to boil. A conflagration must have ensued, had not his father seen, and, hastening after him, torn the nose- and ear-jewels from him and hurled him into the sea.[1] Again, just as Atalanta was delayed in the race by the golden apples flung by Meilanion, so among the Mbamba of Angola it is told that a cannibal husband was delayed by his fugitive wife, who flung down first millet, then sesamum, and lastly eleusine. The cannibal stopped each time to gather what has fallen, singing, "Pick, pick up! A fruit, don't waste it." Gaining time by this device, the woman succeeded in putting a river between herself and her pursuer, and reached home in safety.[2]

Here we are confronted with the problem how far stories like these can have been transmitted from classic lands, or from some other centre. Taking these two legends of Phaethon and Atalanta as examples, however difficult it may be to believe that they can have arisen independently in more places than one, the difficulties in holding that the stories of the minx and the fugitive wife

[1] *Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pacifischen Küste Amerikas*, von Franz Boas, Berlin, 1895, p. 157.

[2] *Folktales of Angola*, by Heli Chatelain, Boston, 1894, p. 99.

are derived from classic sources are still greater. The legend of the minx is not a play-story. It is seriously believed in British Columbia. The minx is a great figure in the mythology of the tribes of that province; he obtained the invaluable gift of fire for men, and to his escapades many of the peculiarities of the world are attributed. But if the borrowing of the story be thus improbable, the physical difficulties of the transmission would seem to be insuperable. The case for the independent origin of the Mbamba story cannot be put quite so high. The story is one told for amusement only; and the physical difficulties, though great, are not such as to render transmission impossible. But the Mbamba "are fanatically opposed to any innovation," even in a tale. Moreover, the existence of a tribe of cannibals, to which the husband of the story belongs, is an article of their faith. The inveigling of women by other tribes, and the escape of ill-used wives are frequent incidents in the life of savage peoples; while stratagems to delay pursuers would occur to any fugitive, and are commonplaces in the folklore of all nations. The stratagem in the present instance has a native appearance, too thorough to need the hypothesis of borrowing.

The most famous form of the theory that similar stories are, at least in an overwhelming majority of cases, borrowed and not separately

invented, is that which owes its currency to the great Sanskrit scholar, Benfey. In the year 1859 he published a translation of the Indian collection called the *Panchatantra*, accompanied by an elaborate introduction and notes, in which he drew attention to the parallels between Indian and European folktales, and traced the latter to a Buddhist origin. Buddha flourished in Northern India about the sixth century before Christ. Buddhist missionaries soon made their way into all the surrounding countries. Much of their teaching was conveyed in parables, which they ascribed to Buddha himself. By Alexander's invasion, India was brought into direct relations with the West. Among other Indian products, the Buddhist parables found their way to Europe. The written collections (and there were more than one of them) were translated into various tongues of the nearer East, and ultimately into Greek and Latin. The fables bearing the name of Æsop, the romance of the "The Seven Sages," and that of "Barlaam and Josaphat," all popular collections during the Middle Ages, and translated into almost every European language, can be traced by literary transmission, either as collections or in respect of a majority of the component stories, to the Buddhist parables. Many of these stories, or stories closely akin to them, are found in the peasant traditions of Europe. Benfey argued that

they were dispersed from India by means of the written collections. But this did not fit all the facts. Succeeding writers, of whom M. Cosquin in France and Mr. Joseph Jacobs in this country are the most eminent, having a wider knowledge of folktales than Benfey with all his learning had, were bound to concede that the stories traceable from India by literary channels were very far from exhausting the Indian stock. There are other Sanskrit collections, formed more or less under Buddhist influence, containing numbers of tales common to European tradition and indeed throughout the world; and these tales, as well as other tales also belonging to the common stock, are found in the mouths of the Indian peoples at the present day. A new theory, therefore, had to be framed, if the claims of India as the birthplace of traditional stories were to be maintained. The Buddhist propaganda, accordingly, was cast aside. The stories were admitted to have existed in India long before Buddhism. Their transmission, it was alleged, did not date from the preaching of "the Noble Eightfold Path," nor was it wholly or chiefly conducted through literary channels. It began in prehistoric times, and has been going on ever since, by word of mouth.

To examine the theory in detail and discuss the ingenious arguments with which it has been supported would carry us beyond the limit of a paper

like this. Shortly, however, it may be said that it has two great and insurmountable difficulties to face, one dealing with the matter, and the other with the form, of the tales.

Before mentioning these it must be said that, since the stories are *ex hypothesi* delivered by way of verbal communication, it is impossible historically to trace the transmission. Even where we can, as in the case of the stories of the *Panchatantra*, trace the transmission by literary channels, the pre-existence of similar stories in, let us say, Europe cannot be wholly excluded. For it must always be remembered that mere priority of record is no proof of priority of existence of any given version of a tale over other versions, still less is it proof of priority of ownership. We have seen that in the seventeenth century a version of Cinderella was written down in France, much more modern in its form than versions from Russian Carelia and Scotland, first recorded some two centuries later. It cannot be supposed that the latter were derived from Perrault's story, nor can we even infer that they are in point of time younger. All alike they date from savagery; but the versions more recently recorded have preserved more savage, and consequently older, forms than the one first set down. This is a phenomenon of frequent occurrence. To ascertain the place of origin of a story, we are, therefore, thrown back

upon internal evidence, that is, upon reasoning from the stories themselves, their contents and their form. It is here that the two difficulties come in.

First of all, folktales are founded upon modes of thought and action by no means peculiar to India—modes of thought and action inseparable from the status of savagery, and of which India has no monopoly. To contend, therefore, as M. Cosquin does, that the true argument against the Indian origin of folktales would be to show that they are in contradiction with the ideas prevalent in India, is entirely to misconceive the situation, and to throw the burden of proof upon the wrong shoulders. If it could be proved that the ideas on which the stories are founded were prevalent in India and in India alone, then of course M. Cosquin's contention would be valid. But this is contrary to the facts. India has no special property in the material of which folktales are woven; it is a material common to the entire world. Here is the first difficulty.

As India has no special property in the material of folktales, so it has none in their form. Are to suppose that all the rest of mankind have been destitute of the story-making faculty? It is incredible. The telling of tales is universal, and the telling of tales stimulates their invention. Accordingly, tales actually exist elsewhere which

have no known analogue in India, just as India itself possesses tales that have not, so far as is ascertained, passed to other lands. If in neither case do these particular tales belong to the stock common to India and the rest of the world, yet they have the same general characteristics, and are made up of similar incidents. Must we then think that a race of romantic geniuses arose at some unknown period in India, and nowhere else, and invented tales adapted to universal acceptance? Was there never a genius born in Europe or in Africa in early times who could originate a story capable of appealing successfully to the imagination of humanity at large? The question answers itself.

In putting the case thus, however, I am putting it in the way most favourable to the theory of the Indian origin. For, as Mr. Jacobs has clearly seen, it is necessary to the argument to emphasise the artistic character of the tales. Many of them are, he says, "masterpieces of constructive literary art," and as such they must have been invented once for all. Some folktales certainly do seem put together with much artistic skill, and if they were always and everywhere told in the same way, the argument would have much force. But the truth is that they are a patchwork of incidents founded on common modes of thought and action. These incidents are put together sometimes with,

and sometimes without, artistic skill, sometimes in one sequence, at other times in another sequence.

If the artistic character of a story be insisted upon as a criterion, then the original form must be the most artistic; and if the argument be worth anything to prove the Indian origin of a tale, it must go on to show that the Indian form is always the most artistic. But this never has been shown. Nay, in some cases, as in that of the story of Perseus, the Indian form is quite the reverse of artistic. Besides, it is misleading to speak of "the Indian form," because usually there are more Indian forms than one, and, so far as I am aware, nobody has yet decided which is the original. Nor in India is the patchwork character of folktales less evident than in other countries. The incidents reappear in every conceivable connection and sequence, now forming part of one plot and now of another. Those who believe in the Indian origin may follow a tale from land to land, and think they can almost reconstruct the Indian version from comparison with others. But they are constantly liable to be disappointed by finding the incidents dislocated, or even scattered and redistributed in plots having no apparent connection with that for which they are looking. Here is the second difficulty.

These two difficulties are together, if not separately, fatal to the claims of India as the only

birthplace of folktales which have attained world-wide, or at all events general, currency. To deny the claims of India involves, by parity of reasoning, a denial of the claims of any other country. It does not, however, involve the assertion that all parallel stories are of independent origin. That stories do travel is indisputable; that they are often borrowed is beyond doubt. On the other hand, we are not warranted in explaining every coincidence by borrowing. Each must be judged upon its own merits. In doing so, large allowance must be made for the oneness of human nature and the similarity of social and other conditions. No one can study the habits of mankind, the processes of thought and the institutions of savage races without being deeply impressed with the unity which underlies all diversity. It would be strange indeed if this underlying unity were exhibited in everything but folktales. And that it is exhibited in folktales also means not that one people has necessarily borrowed from another. It may mean that, given a similar plane of culture, parallel incidents, or even parallel series of incidents, may be equally well imagined by either. Similarity of incident and of what I may call "stage-properties" must of course be limited by the state of society and by external objects. There is no talk of kings or coaches or glass slippers in the stories of the Australian Blackfellows, nor do you hear

of kangaroos or totems or intermarrying classes in the tales of Scottish peasants. But, subject to these necessary limitations, it would be hard to say where similar personages, similar incidents, and similar machinery cannot be found. Sometimes they are borrowed, provided they are delivered in a form suitable to the stage of civilisation of the recipients. I am inclined to think that the cases of independent origination are at least as numerous.

The classical tales, then, like other European folktales, are tales handed down by tradition from older and more barbarous ages. In Bacon's words, "they were common things, derived from precedent memorials." As such, they are records of modes of thought and of institutions out of which the Greeks arose to altitudes of civilisation, where, having lost all direct memory of the past, the sacred stories became to them subjects of perplexity and even shame. They are not the result of philological blunders, nor are they apologues. Philological blunders—folk-etymologies—do exist and give occasion for traditional tales. But these are usually transparent, and do not pretend to be other than they are: stories told to explain a name or a phrase. It is more doubtful how far apologues are a product of tradition. Many fables, like the beast-tales of Æsop or the Buddhist birth-stories, were once, beyond doubt, ordinary

traditional narratives wherein beast and man were indistinguishable. Their appropriation to the purpose of moral or political teaching or of satire came later, when men had ceased to accept them literally and needed make-believe tales to point an exhortation or convey reproof. This secondary application may be traditional. In some cases it is. But that it is a secondary phase, and not primary, should be steadily borne in mind.

It will be evident from what has been said that modern European folktales cannot be the worn-down relics of the classical mythology. They are rather stuff of the kind out of which the classical and other mythologies grew. To suppose that they were merely the detritus of official stories of the classical mythology would be to leave that mythology itself unexplained. It would be to leave the vast stores of savage folktales unaccounted for. It would be to ignore the similarity of the incidents of which folktales all over the world are made up. The theory was once popular. In this island Sir Walter Scott was among its most distinguished advocates. More recently it has been combined with the philological theory of mythology. The same reasons, however, which have led to the abandonment of the philological theory have brought about a truer conception of the origin and meaning of folktales. The enlargement of our knowledge of human

institutions, human customs, and human beliefs, as well as of stories told for pastime, requires and provides, for mythology and folktales alike, an explanation convincing and satisfactory, because it rests not on local or racial peculiarities of speech or belief, but on the surer ground of a common human nature.

In this general sketch of the scientific study of folktales and mythology, I have abstained from obtruding technicalities, but it may be well before closing to indicate the principal divisions into which folktales fall. I have spoken of play-stories and serious tales. Serious tales are those intended, or at one time intended, to be believed. They are in Europe ordinarily attached to some historic or quasi-historic name or to some place, or are occupied with supernatural beings, as fairies, ghosts, or witches. In savage countries they relate to some hero, actual or mythical, or they account for a local peculiarity, or for the existence or form of some external object or social institution. Such tales are called "Sagas," a word adopted from the German. In English, the word "Legend" is often applied to them. On the continent of Europe the word "Legend" is confined to religious narratives, or sagas about sacred personages, localities, or objects.

Among play-stories, or stories told merely for amusement, the most important are "*Märchen*"

(a German word meaning a little tale) or "Nursery-tales," the class to which Cinderella belongs. These are for the most part narratives embodying marvellous occurrences. But, because they are not intended for serious belief, they claim the warrant of no great heroic name, they are linked to no definite locality. Many of them contain incidents of the same character as those of sagas. Indeed, many stories are found sometimes as sagas and sometimes as *märchen*. The exact explanation of this phenomenon is probably different in different cases. In one case the saga may have reached a people who knew nothing of the locality to which it really belonged, and had no reverence for the sacred personage whose adventures it related. Adopted thus in a new home, it may have obtained an existence and vitality independent of any name or place: in other words, it will have become a *märchen*. In another case, a story already current may have become anchored on a certain spot, or attached itself to some historic or mythical name. The *märchen* will thus have become a *saga*. A hero like King Arthur, Frederick Barbarossa, Robert Bruce, or Oliver Cromwell, has a tendency to attract floating tales. Religious heroes—saints—have special powers of attraction; but any great personality is endowed with these powers in proportion to the impression it has made on the

popular mind. In our own day, when miraculous powers are no longer credited even to religious leaders, and consequently stories involving the supernatural element have almost ceased to be current among fairly educated persons, the power of attracting floating tales is still exercised by great men: only the tales are humorous or witty anecdotes.

This leads me to another kind of play-story: the "Droll," of which the Anecdote is a species. The droll is a comic tale, and its object is not merely amusement, but laughter. The droll has been conjectured to be a later growth of culture than the *märchen*, and to be the amusement rather of men than of women. Colour is given to these conjectures by the fact that some stories are found in the form of sagas, *märchen*, and drolls. Roger of Wendover, under the year 1048, gives an account of two women at Rome who, by witchcraft, had transformed a youth into an ass, and made him perform tricks. He was bought from them by a wealthy man, whom they warned to keep him away from water. After a while the ass was successful in breaking his halter and escaping, and he plunged into a pool of water, where he recovered his human form. To his owner's astonishment he related his adventures, and they were reported to Pope Leo. The pope was at first incredulous, but the women were tried

and confessed the witchcraft. This tale, solemnly related and evidently believed by the chronicler, is a very old *märchen*, found all over Europe, on the Mediterranean shores of Africa, and in India. When told as a droll, the change of donkey to man is a trick of some thieves. Thus, in a Breton version, some monks find and steal a miller's donkey, tying up one of their number in his place. When the miller comes to look for the animal he finds the monk, who tells him that he is the donkey, that he was condemned for his sins to penance in that shape, but that his term of penance is now ended and he has returned to his pristine condition. The miller had no alternative but to give him his freedom. The monks, however, were paid out. For, some time after, when they wanted to sell the donkey at the fair of Plouër, the miller saw it and took care to warn all his neighbours of what had happened with the same animal to him. No one, therefore, would buy it, and the monks, who had hoped to make money out of it, were disappointed of their sale.[1]

Many stories are found as traditional ballads. The North and North-West of Europe is particularly rich in this kind of unwritten literature, often of great beauty. The charms of verse render material help in keeping alive the memory of traditional narratives. It is indeed by no

[1] *Revue des Traditions Populaires*, vol. xi. p. 633.

means rare to find folktales preserved only in this way. Thus, a story once current in England, and closely allied to that of Cinderella, would have been lost but for the ballad of *Catskin*.

For scientific purposes folktales are arranged in *groups* and *types*, corresponding to the *genera* and *species* of the natural sciences. Attempts at classification have been made by Von Hahn, Mr. Baring Gould, Mr. Joseph Jacobs, Colonel Temple, and others; but none have yet been completely wrought out. Individual stories of any type are spoken of as *variants*.

Such is a very brief and imperfect outline of a subject of vast range and almost unlimited interest. The study of mythology and folktales, conducted on scientific lines and in connection with that of customs, institutions, and beliefs, has already exercised a considerable influence on modern thought. It is probably destined to still greater power, when its bearings on the long history of mankind are fully understood.

# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX.

## (*a*) AIDS TO THE STUDY OF FOLKTALES.

THE literature of folktales and their interpretation is of enormous extent. In the following list only a few standard works are mentioned, and such as will be useful to an English reader desiring a further general acquaintance with the subject. Collections of folktales are only included where the volumes contain introductory or elucidatory matter of importance.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SCIENCE OF MYTHOLOGY. By the Right Hon. Professor F. Max Müller, K.M. 2 vols. London, Longmans, 1897.

CHIPS FROM A GERMAN WORKSHOP. By the same. 4 vols. London, Longmans, 1867–75.

SELECTED ESSAYS ON LANGUAGE, MYTHOLOGY, AND RELIGION. By the same. 2 vols. London, Longmans, 1881.

THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE ARYAN NATIONS. By George W. Cox, M.A. 2 vols. London, Longmans, 1870.

ZOOLOGICAL MYTHOLOGY, OR THE LEGENDS OF ANIMALS. By Angelo de Gubernatis. 2 vols. London, Trübner, 1872.

[The foregoing reveal the philological interpretation of folktales and mythology in its strength and in its weakness, in the eloquence with which it has been advocated, and in the absurdities and excesses to which it has led. The next five works on the list supply the corrective.]

CUSTOM AND MYTH. By Andrew Lang, M.A. London, Longmans, 1884.

GRIMM'S HOUSEHOLD TALES, with the author's notes. Translated from the German and edited by Margaret Hunt. With an introduction by Andrew Lang, M.A. 2 vols. London, George Bell & Sons, 1884.

MYTH, RITUAL, AND RELIGION. By Andrew Lang, M.A. 2 vols. London, Longmans, 1887.

[A more recent edition has been published (1899), but the older one is the edition recommended.]

PERRAULT'S POPULAR TALES. Edited from the original editions, with introduction, &c., by the same. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1888.

MODERN MYTHOLOGY. By the same. London, Longmans, 1897.

WIDE-AWAKE STORIES. A Collection of Tales told by Little Children between Sunset and Sunrise in the Panjab and Kashmir. By F. A. Steel and R. C. Temple. London, Trübner, 1884.

[Contains an admirable survey of folktale incidents by Colonel Temple.]

THE HANDBOOK OF FOLKLORE. Edited by George Lawrence Gomme, F.S.A. London, Folklore Society, 1890.

[Contains sections on folktales, myths, and ballads.]

CINDERELLA. Three hundred and forty-five variants of Cinderella, Catskin, and Cap o' Rushes, abstracted and tabulated, with a discussion of mediæval analogues, and notes. By Marian Roalfe Cox. With an introduction by Andrew Lang, M.A. London, Folklore Society, 1893.

[A remarkable collection. Miss Cox's preface and notes are a monument of folktale learning. Mr. Lang, in the introduction, defends himself with vigour and success against M. Cosquin. See below.]

THE INTERNATIONAL FOLKLORE CONGRESS, 1891. Papers and Transactions. Edited by Joseph Jacobs and Alfred Nutt. London, Folklore Society, 1892.

[The Folktale section contains the chairman's address on the problems of Transmission, and papers by Mr. W. W. Newell (secretary of the American Folklore Society), M. Emmanuel Cosquin, Mr. Joseph Jacobs, Mr. David MacRitchie, Mr. Alfred Nutt, and M. Ilmarin Krohn.]

CONTES POPULAIRES DE LORRAINE. Comparés avec les Contes des autres Provinces de France et des Pays Étrangers, et précédés d'un Essai sur l'Origine et la Propagation des Contes Populaires Européens. By Emmanuel Cosquin. 2 vols. Paris, Vieweg. [1886.]

[M. Cosquin with much learning and skill maintains the proposition that the European and other folktales of common stock were derived from India.]

THE GOLDEN BOUGH: A STUDY IN COMPARATIVE RELIGION. By J. G. Frazer, M.A. 2 vols. London, Macmillan, 1890.

[A work of the first importance for the study of the relation between tale and custom.]

THE SCIENCE OF FAIRY TALES: AN INQUIRY INTO FAIRY MYTHOLOGY. By Edwin Sidney Hartland. London, Walter Scott, 1891.

THE LEGEND OF PERSEUS: A STUDY OF TRADITION IN STORY, CUSTOM, AND BELIEF. By the same. 3 vols. London, D. Nutt, 1894–95–96.

[I may perhaps be forgiven for adding these. In the former I have dealt with a number of fairy sagas; in the latter I have tried to exhibit the dependence of the folktale upon custom and superstition, and to determine the place of origin of one world-famous tale.]

## (*b*) CHRONOLOGICO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OF FOLKTALE LITERATURE.

[*I have essayed in the following pages both to exhibit the chief literature in which folk- or fairy-tale incidents figure in the chronological sequence of its record, and also to provide the English student with such a full list of works as may enable a fairly exhaustive study of this branch of human fancy and thought.*—ALFRED NUTT.]

*Märchen*, or fairy tales proper (as distinguished from tales about fairies which are included under *sagas*), come before us for the first time in **Egyptian papyri** of the twelfth to nineteenth Dynasties (twenty-eighth to thirteenth century B.C.). These have been translated into French by M. Maspéro (Contes Populaires de l'Egypte Ancienne, Paris, 1882), into English by Prof. Flinders-Petrie and Mr. F. Ll. Griffith (Egyptian Tales translated from the Papyri, 2 vols., London, 1895). Fairy tale themes and incidents appear in old Babylonian literature of uncertain date, but undoubtedly older than the second millennium B.C., notably in the saga of **Sargon**, said to have reigned in the fourth millennium B.C., and the mythological literature describing

the **Creation, Deluge,** and the **Exploits of Gilgames,** whence the Hebrews derived their own mythical Creation literature and the Samson saga.

Similar themes and incidents abound in early Greek mythology and heroic legend, the earliest witness being the **Homeric Poems,** dating in their extant form from 1000 to 800 B.C. The earliest Indian mythological literature being almost exclusively ritual, yields little in this line, but the secondary stage, represented by the **Brahmanas** and the two epics (**Mahábhárata** and **Ramáyana**), and dating roughly from 600 B.C. to A.D., is rich in folktale themes (the Indian epics are accessible to the English reader in Mr. R. C. Dutt's abridged versions, London, 1898–99). A rich folktale literature of great antiquity is vouched for in India by the **Jataka** collection (now being rendered into English under the direction of Prof. Cowell, vols. i.–iii., Cambridge, 1895–96), which seems to have assumed substantially its present form not later than 100 B.C.

For fifth century B.C. Egypt we have the **Master-Thief,** narrated by **Herodotus,** which remained, until the discovery of the earlier Egyptian *Märchen,* the earliest recorded folktale in the world's literature. In fifth to fourth century B.C. Greece we have the mythological literature of the dramatists, and the systematic mythologists of a somewhat later period (**Apollodorus**), rich in folktale themes and incidents. The **Æsopic fable** collection also goes back to this period (*cf.* Jos. Jacobs, The Fables of Æsop, 2 vols., London, 1890).

Roman literature is singularly poor as far as folktales are concerned, though **Livy** in his version of Roman mythical history has preserved a few themes (*e.g.* Romulus and Remus, the Brutus story, &c.). But the Romans, as a rule, were content with re-telling Greek stories (*e.g.* Virgil, Ovid), thereby exercising a considerable influence upon mediæval story-telling, which drew chiefly from Latin and not from Greek sources.

The third century A.D. Latin writer **Apuleius** has preserved the masterpiece of classic fairy tale in his **Cupid and Psyche,** an episode of the Metamorphoses (or the Golden Ass, as it is generally known in English), a work containing many other folktale themes and *motifs* (*cf.* A. Lang, Cupid and Psyche, London, 1887). Greek

writers of the second to fourth centuries A.D., notably Lucian in his **True History** (English version by Willson, London, 1899), and the novelists yield incidents and scenes analogous to those met with in fairy tales (*cf.* Rohde, Der Griechische Roman, Leipzig, 1876).

In India collections of tales which later crystallised into the **Panchatantra** (German translation, with elaborate commentary, by Benfey, 2 vols., Leipzig, 1859), its imitation the **Hitopadesa** (French version by Lancereau, Paris, 1882), and into the group of narratives comprised under the title of the **Seven Sages**, must have been in existence not later than the fourth century A.D. (*cf.* Jos. Jacobs, The Fables of Bidpai, London, 1888). The most extensive Indian collection, the **Katha Sarit Ságara**, belongs, as such, to the twelfth century, but is made up of much older material (English version by Dr. Tawney, 2 vols., Calcutta, 1880–84). The Indian collections became known to and were imitated by Persians, Arabs, Syrians, and Greeks in the sixth to tenth centuries, and certainly contributed their share to the great Arab collection, the **Thousand and One Nights**, which assumed the form under which it has come down to us between 1200 and 1500 A.D. (the best English translation for the folk-lorist is that of Sir Richard Burton, 16 vols., London, N.D., but published 1886–89; a complete French version is now being published, of which vols. i.–vii. have appeared).

The mythico-heroic literature of the Barbarians, whose conquest of and assimilation to the Roman Empire resulted in mediæval-modern Europe, is as rich in folktale themes and traits as is that of the Greeks or Indians. The oldest and purest (*i.e.* least affected by Græco-Roman civilisation) is that of the **Irish Celts**, dating, in the form under which it has come down to us, from 500 to 1000 A.D. (*cf.* Nos. 1 and 3 of this series; also The Voyage of Bran, by K. Meyer and A. Nutt, 2 vols., 1895–97; and The Cuchullin Saga, by E. Hull, 1898). The **Continental Teutons**, including among them the Anglo-Saxon settlers in the British Isles, have valuable mythico-heroic fragments of the seventh to tenth centuries (*cf.* Beowulf, modern English versions by B. Thorpe, Oxford, 1855, and J. L. Hale, Boston, 1893; also Stopford Brooke's Early English Literature, 1892). The **Northern Teutons** have bequeathed

us what is unquestionably the noblest mythology, and the richest in folktale themes, outside that of Greece, in their mythico-heroic narratives in verse and prose, dating, in the form under which they have come down to us, from the tenth to the thirteenth century, and largely vouched for as to substance by testimonies of the ninth century (the standard English work on this literature is Vigfusson and Powell's Corpus Poeticum Boreale, 2 vols., Oxford, 1883; *cf.* also Anderson's translation of the Prose or Younger Edda, Chicago, 1880).

With the exception of Beowulf, the earliest handling on an extensive scale of Teutonic heroico-mythic material is in Latin, the **Waltharius** of Ekkehard of St. Gall, who died in 975 (accessible in the German version of Althof, 1896). A somewhat later Latin poem, **Ruodlieb**, by an unknown German writer, *circa* 1030–1040 (edited by Seiler, Halle, 1882), is of great interest as being the oldest example of the knightly romance which flourished so luxuriantly in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, and the subject-matter of which has such marked analogies with the fairy tale.

In France a rich heroic romance grew up, partly in Latin, partly in the vernacular, during the tenth to twelfth centuries, centring around Charles the Great (814). In its earlier and purer stage (*i.e.* pre-1150), this romance contains very little folktale material, infinitely less than the Celtic or Teutonic literature already noticed.

The Norman conquest of England was of immense importance in the evolution of romantic literature (*cf.* No. 1 of this series). The **Welsh Celts** seem to have been stimulated to record their own mythical tales, which are exceedingly rich in folktale traits, scenes, and incidents, and one of which, **Kulhwch and Olwen**, is one of the finest fairy tales in all literature (English translation [1849] by Lady Guest, The Mabinogion, London, 1877). Celtic mythic tales generally became accessible to, and were assimilated by, the leading literature of the time, that of France; the French **Arthurian romance** took rise; the French Charlemagne romance was transformed in imitation; by virtue of the same impulse a vast body of German heroic saga in knightly guise came into existence (**Niebelungenlied**, the **Dietrich poems**, &c.), all more or less affected by the

French Arthurian romance. All this literature, Celtic, Celto-French and Celto-English, Franco-German and pure German, betrays the most marked affinities with the fairy tale familiar to us; but, as a rule, the affinities are of such a nature as to pre-suppose an existing fairy tale, rather than to countenance the derivation of the latter from the romances.

Simultaneously with this great outburst of romance, which was mainly the result of contact in England between Celtic and Teutonic mythic saga on the one hand, and the French literary instinct on the other, a wave of **Eastern influence** overran West Europe, partly from the Moorish kingdom of Spain, partly from the direct contact between Christians and Saracens due to the Crusades, mainly through the increased intercourse between Western Europe and the Byzantine Empire. The stories which thus demonstrably came to West Europe are, however, rather of an edifying or humorous than of a fairy tale, and are best represented by the great thirteenth-century collection, the **Gesta Romanorum** (Mediæval English version, edited by S. J. H. Herrtage, Early English Text Society, 1879; modern English version in the Bohn Library, 1876), although this contains many genuine *Märchen*. More definitely Oriental are the **Seven Sages** groups of tales (*cf.* Wright's edition of the old English metrical version, Percy Society, 1845). Oriental influence is also marked in such mediæval collections (largely used for pulpit purposes) of edifying anecdotes as **Jacques de Vitry's** Exempla (edited by Prof. Crane, Folk-Lore Society, 1890), and, though to a much less extent, in the by no means edifying metrical narratives known as **Fabliaus**, of which a vast number were produced in France from about 1160 to the end of the thirteenth century (the fullest collection is that of Montaiglon and Raynaud, 6 vols., Paris, 1872-90; *cf.* M. Bédier's masterly monograph, Les Fabliaux, Paris, 1896).

Contemporaneous with and partly a manifestation of the same spirit as the fabliaus, is the mediæval French beast epic of **Renard**, the earliest forms of which, in Latin, go back to the eleventh century, but which, in its existing shape (1180–1250), has admitted Oriental material (*cf.* M. L. Sudre's monograph, Le Roman de Renart, Paris, 1892; Prof. Arber has reprinted the

earliest printed English version, and Mr. Jos. Jacobs is preparing an edition of the same, with a history of the cycle). The French fabliau passed away and was succeeded by the Italian **novella**, which is in prose instead of in verse, and which mingles tragedy and melodrama with farce much more than the fabliau. The most famous collection of novelle is the **Decameron** of Boccaccio. Nearly all the novelle, of which Italy produced a vast mass in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, contain a certain amount of folktale material; but in the **Piacevoli Notte** of **Straparola** (1560) we have this element represented so largely that it may be called the earliest collection of fairy tales in European literature (accessible in the sixteenth-century French translation, reprinted, 2 vols., Paris, 1857). Some eighty years later (1634–36) appeared the **Pentamerone** of **Basile**, which is not only entirely made up of fairy tales, but of tales which undoubtedly were mainly based upon oral recitation and not upon books (Select English version by Taylor, London, 1848). Meanwhile it should be noticed that sixteenth to seventeenth century literature in England (Shakespeare and the dramatists, Drayton, Herrick, Milton, &c.), in Germany (Hans Sachs, Ayrer, Fischart), in France (Rabelais, Noel du Fail), reveals knowledge of many folktale themes and characters (*cf.* No. 6 of this Series).

**Perrault's** French collection, partly derived from the oral recitation of his son's nurse, **Contes de ma Mère l'Oye** (1694–97), made the fairy tale fashionable; he was followed by Madame d'Aulnoy (1708) and others. Translations from these collections and from the **Arabian Nights**, made known to Europe by **Galland**, 1704–1717, with a few native English stories extant in miserable chapbook versions, formed the bulk of fairy tale books published in this country throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. At the close of the eighteenth century, **Musäus** (1782) did for Germany what Perrault and his followers had done for France; like them, he arranged and prettified or moralised his tales. The first attempt to give the folktale in its native simplicity and charm, in a genuine form and without making it a subject of literary art, was that of **Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm** in their immortal **Kinder- und Haus-Märchen** (1819), originating as it did that

reverent and loving study of folk-literature which has been one of the most characteristic developments of the nineteenth century.

In the following paragraphs I do not propose to give a complete list of folktale collections published in this century, but merely to indicate the more important and representative ones, and in especial such as have appeared in an English version. The dates given are that of first issue.[1]

BRITISH ISLES.—**Crofton Croker**, Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland, 3 vols., 1825–28; **Chambers**, Popular Rhymes of Scotland, 1841; **Halliwell**, Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales, 1849; **Campbell**, Popular Tales of the West Highlands, 4 vols., 1860–62; **Kennedy**, Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts, 1866; **Henderson**, Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties, 1866; **Larminie**, West Irish Folk-Tales, 1893; **Curtin**, Myths and Folk-Lore of Ireland, 1890, Hero Tales of Ireland, 1894.

GERMANY.—**Bechstein**, Deutsches Märchenbuch, 1845; **Müllenhoff**, Sagen, Märchen, etc. aus Schleswig-Holstein, 1845; **Wolf**, Deutsche Märchen, &c., 1845; **Kuhn und Schwartz**, Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen, &c., 1848; **Wolf**, Deutsche Hausmärchen, 1851; **Zingerle**, Kinder- und Hausmärchen, 1852–54; **Meier**, Volksmärchen aus Schwaben, 1852; **Haltrich**, Volksmärchen aus Siebenbürgen, 1856; **Vernaleken**, Mythen und Bräuche der Völker in Oesterreich, Vienna, 1859; **Sutermeister**, Kinder- und Hausmärchen aus der Schweiz, 1873; **Bartsch**, Sagen und Märchen aus Mecklenburg, 2 vols., 1879–80; **Jahn**, Volksmärchen aus Pommern, 1891.

SCANDINAVIA.—**Asbjörnsen og Moe**, Norske Folkeeventyr, 1843–48; ditto, Ny Samling, 1872 (first series translated by Dasent, 1858; second series translated by Dasent, 1874; Braekstad, 1896); **Cavallius und Stephens**, Schwedische Volkssagen und Märchen, 1848; **Arnason**, Islenzkar Aefintyri, 1864 (translated by Magnusson and Powell, 2 series, 1864–68).

ITALY.—**Gonzenbach**, Sicilianische Märchen, 2 vols., 1870; **Pitré**, Fiabe Novelle e racconti Popolari Siciliani,

[1] A fairly complete list of folktale collections to date of issue (1883) will be found in *Folk-Lore Journal*, vol. i. pp. 43–50.

4 vols., 1875; **Imbriani,** La Novellaja Fiorentina, 1871; **Crane,** Italian Folk-Tales (a translation, with notes, of a selection from the foregoing and other collections), 1885.

SPAIN.—**Caballero,** The Bird of Truth, and other fairy tales, translated by J. H. Ingram, 1881; **Maspons y Labrós,** Lo Rondallayre, Barcelona, 1871; **Alcover,** Aplech de Rondayes Mallorquines, 3 vols., issued Ciutat de Mallorca, 1896–97–98.

PORTUGAL.—**Pedroso,** Portuguese Folk-Tales, translated by H. Monteiro, 1870 (Folk-Lore Society Publications, No. IX.); **Coelho,** Contos Populares Portuguezes, Lisbon, 1879; **De Vasconcellos,** Tradiçoẽs Populares de Portugal, Porto, 1882; **Braga,** Contos Tradicionaes do Povo Portuguez, 2 vols., Porto, N.D.

FRANCE.—**Sebillot,** Contes Populaires de la Haute-Bretagne, 3 vols., 1880–82. **Cosquin,** Contes Populaires de Lorraine, 2 vols., 1886; **Bladé,** Contes Populaires de la Gascogne, 3 vols., 1886; **Luzel,** Contes Populaires de la Basse-Bretagne, 3 vols., 1887.

SLAVDOM.—**Naaké,** Slavonic Fairy Tales, 1874; **Wratislaw,** Sixty Folk-Tales from exclusively Slavonic sources, 1889. (*a*) SLAVONIC BOHEMIA.—**Wenzig,** Westslavischer Märchenschatz, 1857. (*b*) WENDLAND.—Haupt und Schmaler, Volkslieder und Märchen der Wenden, 2 vols., 1841. (*c*) POLAND.—**Godin,** Polnische Märchen (translated from Glinski's collection, 1862), Leipzig, 1878. (*d*) RUSSIA.—**Ralston,** Russian Folk-Tales 1873 (chiefly from the collections of Afanasief, 1860–63, and Khudyakof, 1850; **Bain,** Russian Fairy Tales, 1892, translated from Polevoi's collection; Cossack Fairy Tales, 1894. (*e*) SERVIA.—**Karadschitsch,** Volksmärchen der Serben, Berlin, 1854 (many of these have been translated by Madame Mijatovics and published under the title of Serbian Folk-Lore, 1874); **Krauss,** Sagen und Märchen der Sudslaven, 2 vols., Leipzig, 1883–84.

LITHUANIA.—**Schleicher,** Litauische Märchen, Weimar, 1857; **Leskien und Brugmann,** Litauische Volkslieder und Märchen, Strassburg, 1882.

FIN- UND ESTHLAND.—**Kreuzwald,** Esthnische Märchen, 1889; **Jannsen,** Märchen und Sagen des Esthnischen Volkes, 2 series, Dorpat, 1881–88; **Schreck,** Finnische Märchen, Weimar, 1887; **Kirby,** The Hero of Esthonia, 2 vols., 1895 (*cf.* No. 5 of present series).

HUNGARY.—**Jones und Kropf**, The Folk-Tales of the Magyar (translated from Kriza, Erdelyi, Pap, and others), 1889 (Folk-Lore Society Publications, No. XIII.).

GIPSYDOM.—**Von Wlislocki**, Märchen und Sagen der Transsilvanischen Zigeuner, Berlin, 1886; **Groome**, Gypsy Folk-Tales, 1899.

ALBANIA.—**Hahn**, Griechische und Albanesische Märchen, Leipzig, 1864; **Dozon**, Contes Albanais, 1881.

ROUMANIA.—**Schott**, Walachische Märchen, Stuttgart, 1845.

MODERN GREECE.—**Schmidt**, Griechische Märchen, Leipzig, 1877; **Legrand**, Contes Populaires Grecs, 1881; **Garnett**, Greek Folk-Poesy, 2 vols, 1896 (Vol. I., Ballads; Vol. II., Prose Tales).

NORTHERN (MOHAMMEDAN) AFRICA.—**De Rochemonteix**, Quelques Contes Nubiens, Cairo, 1888; **Stumme**, Tunisische Märchen und Gedichte, 2 vols., Leipzig, 1893; Märchen der Schluh von Tázerwalt, Leipzig, 1895; Märchen und Gedichte aus der Stadt Tripolis, Leipzig, 1898.

MODERN INDIA.—**Frere**, Old Deccan Days, 1866; **Stokes**, Indian Fairy Tales, 1880; **Steele and Temple**, Wide-Awake Stories, 1884; **Knowles**, Folk-Tales of Kashmir, 1888.

TIBET.—**Schiefner**, Tibetan Tales, 1882.

MONGOLIA.—**Jülg**, Mongolische Märchen, 1867.

CHINA.—**Dennys**, The Folk-Lore of China, 1876 (contains many folktales); **Giles**, Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio, 2 vols., 1880, selected and translated from a Chinese collection.

JAPAN.—**Mitford**, Tales of Old Japan, 2 vols., 1871; **Von Langegg**, Japanische Thee-Geschichten, Vienna, 1884; **Brauns**, Japanische Märchen und Sagen, 1885.

COREA.—**Allen**, Korean Tales, 1889; **Arnous**, Korea: Märchen und Legenden, &c., Leipzig, N.D.

FURTHER INDIA.—**Landes**, Contes et Légendes Annamites, 1886, Contes Tjames, 1887; **Des Michels**, Contes Plaisants Annamites, 1888; **Leclère**, Cambodge: Contes et Légendes, 1895.

The foregoing material may be said in a measure to belong to a common folklore fund, the internal relations, actions, and reactions of which can in a large degree be determined historically.

Folktale themes and incidents occur likewise alike in sagas and *Märchen* in America, Africa (Central and Southern), and Polynesia.

AMERICA.—The mythic and heroic sagas of the Peruvians, in so far as they were preserved by the Spanish conquerors, may be found in **Markham's** Rites and Laws of the Incas, 1872; *cf.* also **Brinton's** Hero Tales of America, 1882. Their folktale character is very marked. The Maya-speaking tribes of CENTRAL AMERICA have preserved a very interesting mythico-heroic history, the **Popol Vuh** (French version by Brasseur de Bourbourg, 1861), which is full of folklore material. The heroic traditions of MEXICO may be best found in **Brinton's** Hero Tales. The Indians of NORTH AMERICA (the present United States and British America) are richly provided with sagas and *Märchen*; in some cases, *e.g.* the tribes of Canada and New England, a certain amount of European influence is noticeable, but the genuine character of the majority is vouched for by testimonies reaching from the Jesuit missionaries (end of sixteenth to eighteenth century) to the scientific investigators of the present century. The most valuable collections are:—**Dorsey**, The Cegiha Language, Washington, 1890; **Boas**, Chinook Texts, Washington, 1894; Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pacifischen Küste Amerikas, Berlin, 1895; **Grinnell**, Pawnee Hero-Stories and Folk-Tales, New York, 1889; Blackfoot Lodge Tales, 1893; **Matthews**, Navaho Legends, Boston, 1897; **Teit**, Traditions of the Thompson River Indians of British Columbia, Boston, 1898 (Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Society, vols. v. and vi.).

The NEGROES of North America and the West Indies have a rich store of tales, chiefly of the animal kind. In North America the hero is mostly the rabbit, and Mr. Harris has made these tales popular by his admirable re-telling: Brer Rabbit, 1880. Many of the negro tales show traces of influence from the allied European stories of the Reynard type, and from the mythological stories of the North American Indians relating to the coyote and other animals, but the bulk of this material was undoubtedly brought from Africa by the ancestors of the present negro population. The West Indian negroes have preserved a purer form, their mythical hero being the spider (Ananci), whence the name: Ananci Stories.

AFRICA.—**Steere,** Swahili Tales, as told by the natives of Zanzibar, 1870 (many of these stories were derived from Arab channels); **Callaway,** Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus, 1868; **Casalis,** The Basutos, 1861 (a translation from a French work under the same title which had appeared shortly before; it contains a number of tales); **Bleek,** Reynard the Fox in South Africa, 1864; **Theal,** Kaffir Folk-Lore, N.D. (1882); Folk-Lore Journal, edited by the Working Committee of the South African Folk-Lore Society, 2 vols., 1879–80; **Chatelain,** Folktales of Angola, Boston, 1894 (Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Society, vol. i.); **Junod,** Les Chants et les Contes des Ba-Ronga, Lausanne, N.D. (1898).

POLYNESIA.—**Grey,** Polynesian Mythology, 1855; **Taylor,** New Zealand and its Inhabitants, 1870 (contains much information on the mythology and many tales); **Gill,** Myths and Songs from the South Pacific, 1876; **White,** The Ancient History of the Maori, his Mythology and Traditions, 6 vols., Wellington, N.Z., 1887–90.

AUSTRALIA.—**Parker,** Australian Legendary Tales, 2 series, 1896–98.

MELANESIA.—**Codrington,** The Melanesians: Studies in their Anthropology and Folk-Lore, 1891 (contains a number of tales).

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The facts which emerge from a broad survey of folk-tale material as recorded in literature are as follows: This material is found everywhere as forming part of what every race believes to be the oldest account of its origins and earliest history; worked up into the form of *Märchen*, it belongs to the very earliest recorded examples of literature; it is found everywhere among the backward races, or among the backward classes of the civilised races; in proportion as civilisation advances it tends to disappear altogether or to be greatly modified.

DAVID NUTT, 57–59 LONG ACRE

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# CUCHULAINN, THE IRISH ACHILLES

"Mors Conchulaind fortissimi herois Scottorum la Lugaid mac tri con, i. ri Muman, agus la Ercc, i. ri Temrach, mac Coirpri Niad fir, agus la tri maccu Calattin de Chonnachtaib; vii mbliadna a aes intan rogab gaisced, xvii mbliadna dano a aes intan mboi indegaid Tána bó Cuáilge, xxvii bliadna immorro a aes intan atbath."

"The death of Cuchulainn, the mightiest hero of the Scots, by Lugaid son of Three Hounds, king of Munster, and by Erc, king of Tara, son of Carbre Nia fer, and by the three sons of Calatin of Connaught. Seven years was his age when he assumed arms, seventeen was his age when he followed the Driving of the kine of Cualgne, but twenty-seven years was his age when he died."

Such is the entry made in his *Annals*, under a date corresponding roughly to the year of Christ's nativity, by Tigernach hua Braein, Abbot of Clonmacnois, who died in the year 1088, concerning the Gaelic hero whose legend I propose to examine

briefly in the following study. It cannot but interest us to know what stories were told by the ancient Irish of their *fortissimus heros*, their most famous champion, what the manners and customs, the social and political organisation which these stories reveal, what the ideals of conduct, the outlook upon life and death of the race by which they were fashioned.

A few, but very few words are needed respecting the extent and date of the stories which have come down to us and the mode of their transmission. Fuller details will be found in the Appendix. Here it suffices to say that we possess a MS. literature of which Cuchulainn and his contemporaries are the subject, the extent of which may be roughly reckoned at 2000 8vo pages. The great bulk of this is contained in MSS. which are older than the twelfth century, or which demonstrably are copied from pre-twelfth century MSS.; where post-twelfth century versions alone remain, the story itself is nearly always known from earlier sources; in fact, there is hardly a single scene or incident in the whole cycle which has reached us only in MSS. of the thirteenth and following centuries. At the same time a not inconsiderable portion of the cycle comes before us altered in language, and to some extent in content, style of narrative, and characterisation, showing that the saga as a whole remained a living element of

Irish culture and participated in the accidents of its evolution.

The great bulk of this literature is, as I have said, certainly older than the twelfth century; but we can carry it back much farther, apart from any considerations based upon the subject-matter. Arguments of a nature purely philological, based upon the language of the texts, or critical, based upon the relations of the various MSS. to each other, not only allow, but compel us to date the *redaction* of the principal Cuchulainn stories, substantially in the form under which they have survived, back to the seventh to ninth centuries. Whether or no they are older yet, is a question that cannot be answered without preliminary examination of the subject-matter. In the meantime it is something to know that the Cuchulainn stories were put into permanent literary form at about the same date as Beowulf, some 100 to 250 years before the Scandinavian mythology crystallised into its present form, at least 200 years before the oldest Charlemagne romances, and probably 300 years before the earliest draft of the Nibelungenlied. Irish is the most ancient *vernacular* literature of modern Europe, a fact which of itself commends it to the attention of the student.

The form of these stories is a mixture of prose and verse. The men to whom they owe their

existing shape are: (1) the court story-tellers, who underwent a long and severe professional training, and were of high social standing; the *ollamh* or chief minstrel ranks immediately after the Brehon or lawman, and occupies a position corresponding to the second class of the fighting, landholding aristocracy; (2) the scribes, Christian monks for the most part. It is also worthy of note that many existing texts are mere skeleton summaries, and were doubtless intended to be filled out in oral recitation.

Thus these stories are the work of a professional class specially charged with the preservation of the tribal traditions, and handsomely rewarded for their labours both in wealth and honours. They formed the subject of oral recitation as well as of written record, from the seventh century onwards for at least a thousand years. I now propose to briefly summarise the most important of them in so far as they are immediately concerned with the life and personality of the hero, and have essayed to omit no incident essential to the conduct of the tale or that may throw light upon its date and nature, using, where possible, the words of the original.

**The Hero's Birth.**—All the stories agree in making him a son of Dechtire, sister of Conchobor, king of North-Eastern Ulster, who held his court at Emain Macha (in the present county of

Armagh), and was surrounded by a band of warriors known as the Red Branch, chief among whom was the king's nephew, Conall Cearnach. But there is by no means the same unanimity respecting his father. Some texts, especially such as have obviously been arranged to give them an aspect of historical truth, represent him as son of an Ulster chieftain, Sualtam. But there exists a small group of stories, betraying their age by their obscure, fragmentary, and confused form, which tell a very different tale. Of these, one hints at an incestuous union between Conchobor and Dechtire, whence sprang the hero. We are reminded that Siegfried, the Teutonic hero *par excellence*, had the same origin. Two other texts assign to him a divine parentage. Lug, at once Sun-god and Master of Arts and Crafts in Irish mythology, transformed himself, according to one version, into a small insect, hid himself in Dechtire's goblet, and, swallowed by her, was reborn as Cuchulainn. According to another version, Dechtire and her attendant maidens vanish suddenly and mysteriously from the Emanian court. After a while a bird flock begins to frequent the plain of Emania, consuming everything, until not a blade of grass is left. The Ulster chiefs yoke their chariots and follow in pursuit. At nightfall they come to the mansion of Lug, who reveals it was he had carried

off Dechtire and her maidens, had changed them into birds, and sent them to lure hither the warriors of Ulster. In the morning Dechtire bears a son; Conchobor and his nobles agree to share his bringing up, and to confer upon him each his special gift, whilst Morann the lawman breaks into prophecy of his future greatness. "His praise shall be in the mouths of all men . . . kings and sages shall recount his deeds; he will win the love of many . . . he will avenge all your wrongs; he will decide all your quarrels."

**His Boyish Exploits.**—We next hear of Cuchulainn from a text the final redaction of which belongs to what may be called the Sualtam stage of the cycle. He is described as "reared in his father's and mother's house by the seaside, northwards in the plain of Muirthemne," though, as a matter of fact, the mother alones takes any part in the tale. One day the boy, whilst quite little, tells his mother he is bent upon visiting Emania, and measuring himself against the youths of Conchobor's court. In vain she objects his youth and weakness. Away he goes, taking with him his hurley of brass, his ball of silver, his throwing javelin, his boy spear. Striking the ball, he casts after it hurley, javelin, and spear, and catches all up ere the spear touches the ground. Reaching Emania, he wins goal after goal against the entire strength of Conchobor's youth; nay, more, when

attacked by them he drives them before him into the king's presence, and does not hold his hand until they have acknowledged him as their chief. All this takes place when he is five years old.

**His Naming.**—The boy stays at Emania. In the following year the king and his court are bidden to a banquet by a smith named Culann. Conchobor asks the boy to come with him, but the latter, engaged in single-handed play against his comrades and not caring to interrupt his game, says he will follow. The king and his train are received in becoming fashion by Culann; fresh rushes are laid, the banquet is served, and the host asks the king's permission to let loose his ban-dog; "the strength of a hundred was in him, surely an extraordinarily cruel, fierce, and savage dog was he." Conchobor, forgetting his nephew, grants the permission. After a while, Cuchulainn, his game finished, follows up the chariot tracks and reaches Culann's house. The ban-dog charges him, minded at one gulp to swallow him down, but the boy, seizing him by the hind-legs, bangs him against a rock and slays him. The feasters rush out, and Culann, finding his dog slain, is heartily vexed, but the boy bids him not be angered; were there a whelp of the same breed, he would rear it until full-grown, and meanwhile would do a ban-dog's office in guarding the cattle and strong place of the smith. All hail the

award, and Cathbad the Druid declares that hereafter Setanta (such had been his name hitherto) shall be called Cu Chulainn, Culann's hound. The lad protests he prefers his own name, but Cathbad assures him "that all men in the world should have their mouths full of his new name," and upon that understanding it was pleasing to him.

**The Assumption of Arms.**—In the following year Cathbad, the Druid, being one day with eight of his pupils, declared that should any stripling take arms on that day, his fame would transcend that of all Ireland's youth, but his life would be fleeting, short. Though separated from the Druid and his throng by Emania's breadth, Cuchulainn hears this. Putting off his playing suit, he comes before Conchobor and declares his wish to take arms. The king consents, but every weapon he bestows upon Cuchulainn is broken, until he gives his own spear and sword and shield. These Cuchulainn proves and finds good. Cathbad entering, and amazed at seeing so young a lad equipped warrior-like, learns that his own speech had determined Cuchulainn's decision. The Druid confirms his sooth, "noble and famous shall Cuchulainn be, but transitory, soon gone." "Little care I," says the hero, "not though I were to live but one day and night, so long as after me the tale of myself and my doings may endure."

Thereafter Cuchulainn mounts a chariot, but not until he has broken seventeen does he find the car of Iubar, son of Riangabra, strong enough to bear him. With Iubar for his charioteer he makes his way to Slievefuad, where Conall Cearnach, Ireland's pre-eminent man of war, is mounting guard over the province of Ulster. Joining him, he expresses his intent to start forth alone on a venture of danger. To free himself from Conall, who would follow and protect him, Cuchulainn hurls a stone at his cousin's chariot, and Conall, dashed to the ground, wrathfully lets him continue his way alone. Despite his charioteer's reluctance, Cuchulainn pushes on into enemies' country until he nears the *dún* of Nechtan's three sons, "the tale of Ulster braves now alive exceeded not the count of those fallen by their hands." Cuchulainn challenges and slays the three champions, and, on his way back to Emania, runs down on foot and captures two wild stags. Wrathfully and fiercely he approaches the king's court, "for when his battle fury was upon him he knew not friend from foe." To overcome him, the ladies of the court appear before him unclad, and, when he shuts his eyes to the sight, he is seized, passed through three vats of cold water, which his fury causes to boil, and his rage departs from him.

Such before his seventh year was accomplished

were the mighty deeds of Cuchulainn, and the position he held at Conchobor's court.

**How he Wooed Emer.**—As the hero grows up he surpasses all his comrades, and the women of Ulster love him greatly "for his dexterity in feats, the excellency of his wisdom, the sweetness of his speech, the beauty of his face." He has no wife, and the men of Ulster are troubled—had he, thought they, a maiden to woo, 'tis the less he would spoil their daughters and accept the love of their women. Moreover, knowing he is to perish early, they wish he may have an heir, for his re-birth would be of himself. Messengers are sent throughout Ireland, but a year's search reveals no maiden whom he deigns to woo. "One such alone of all the maidens of Erin was there, one having the six gifts, voice, sweet speech, needlework, wisdom, and chastity . . . none were a fitting match for him, save his equal in age and form and race, in skill and deftness, and the best handworker of the maidens of Erin. Such a one was Emer, daughter of Forgall the Wily."

So Cuchulainn dons his festal array and mounts his chariot, with his charioteer, Laeg, son of Riangabra, "that was the one chariot that the hosts of the horses of the chariots of Ulster could not follow on account of its swiftness and speed." Surrounded by her maidens, Emer receives the

hero, who woos her with dark sayings which she alone understands. He vaunts his descent and valour and accomplishments, "all the men of Ulster have taken part in my bringing up, chariot chiefs, kings, and head poets . . . I am the darling of the host . . . I fight for the honour of all alike." In reply to his inquiry as to her bringing up, Emer answers, "In ancient virtues, in lawful behaviour, in the keeping of chastity." Has he a wife, she asks, and when he says no, declares she may not marry before her elder sister; but her Cuchulainn will in nowise have, because she has slept once with Cairpre Niafer, the King of Ireland's son, and "never would Cuchulainn accept a woman who had known man before him." Emer is scornful of Cuchulainn's exploits, which she derides as the "goodly feats of a tender boy," but she gives him to understand that if he slay so and so many of her kindred she will be his. And so they part.

Forgall is away whilst this is passing. On his return he plans to hinder the lovers. Donning the garb of a foreigner, as it were an embassy from the King of the Gauls, he journeys to Conchobor's court. There he witnesses the feats of Cuchulainn and the other champions, and asserts that if the former would but go to Domnall the Soldierly in Alba, and to Scathach, to acquire soldier's skill, he would excel all the warriors of

Europe. Cuchulainn consents to go, but first exacts Forgall's oath to grant him his wish on his return. Before starting, he and Emer meet again, and promise to keep their chastity until they met again, unless either should get death thereby.

As he journeys to seek Scathach, Cuchulainn encounters many and great dangers. But helpers present themselves; a lion serves him as guide and steed through a desert in which he had lost his way, a magic wheel and apple bestowed upon him are clues across the Plain of Ill Luck and through the Perilous Glens. Finally he achieves the venture of the swinging bridge which gives access to the isle of Scathach the Amazon. Here he perfects himself in all warlike exercises, loves and is loved by Uathach, Scathach's daughter, and finally overcomes Aife, an Amazon chieftainess, Scathach's rival. Upon her he begets a son, whom the mother promises to send to Erin in seven years' time, and for whom he leaves a name. Thereafter he journeys back to Erin, and comes, on his homeward way, to the house of Ruad, King of the Isles. Sounds of wailing are audible, and Cuchulainn learns that the king's daughter is to be given as a tribute to the Fomori. He rescues her, slaying three of the sea-robbers, but departs without making himself known. She seeks him later in bird guise, is wounded by him, and, when she reassumes human form, is cured by

his sucking the blood from her wound; this sets a barrier between them, so he gives her to his comrade Lugaid of the Red Stripes. So well is Emer guarded by her kinsmen, that a year passes before Cuchulainn can overcome and slay the guard and carry her off to Emania. They wed, and Bricriu of the Poison Tongue, intent as ever upon mischief-making, points out that Conchobor, as king, has the right of passing the first night with Emer. The nobles of Ulster conciliate Cuchulainn, whilst safeguarding the king's right by insisting upon a purely symbolical exercise of it. In the morning the king pays Emer's wedding gift, the marriage is consummated, and "Cuchulainn and his wife did not separate till they were both dead." And the chieftancy of the youths of Ulster was given to Cuchulainn.

**How Cuchulainn Guarded the Marches of Ulster.**—We now come to the culminating point alike of the hero's prowess and renown, and of Irish heroic legend, the description of how, single-handed, he held at bay the forces of all Ireland bent upon raiding Ulster to carry off the famous Brown Bull of Cuailgne. This was no common bull. Two members of the god-clan of the ancient Irish, after passing through a series of transformations in which they perpetually strive against each other but without either gaining the mastery, contrive to be reborn as bulls; one, Finnbennach,

the White-horned, is the property of Meave, Queen of Connaught, but scorning to be under petticoat rule, he departs and takes his place among the herds of her husband Ailill; the other, the Brown Bull, is owned by Daire mac Fachtna, an Ulster chieftain. Now, one day Meave and Ailill dispute as to which is the better of the two. They total up their belongings and find them equal in value, save that Ailill's bull, the White-horned, surpasses all Meave's cattle, "and because she had not a bull of his size, it was as though she owned no pennyworth of stock." She is told of the Brown Bull, and sends MacRoth, the Connaught herald, to beg it of Daire, offering him most liberal terms of purchase. MacRoth plays his part with his wonted discretion and skill, but unfortunately one of his attendants drinks too freely, and boasts in the hearing of Daire's men that if the latter did not give up the bull freely Meave would take it by force. Daire, told of this, swears by his gods that unless taken by foul means the bull shall never be Meave's. Incensed at his refusal, the queen summons all her forces and allies; chief among the latter are Fergus, Conchobor's uncle, and Cormac, Conchobor's son, exiled from Ulster after the treacherous slaughter of the sons of Usnech, as is told in the tale of that name. Meave determines to attack at a time when the Ulster warriors are prostrate from a

weakness that overtakes them periodically in requital of a shameful wrong wrought by one of Conchobor's ancestors upon a member of the Irish god-clan, who had put off her goddess-hood to wed an Ulster chief. Before starting she decides to confer with her wizard, and seek of him foreknowledge and prophecy. The wizard reassures her, "whoever comes or comes not back, she should return." But on the homeward way she is stayed by a maiden, who announces herself as a seeress out of Cruachan's fairy hill. "How seest thou our host?" asks Meave. "I see them all in red, I see them all becrimsoned," is the answer returned again and again to the repeated and incredulous expostulations of the queen. Finally the seeress bursts into an enthusiastic panegyric of Cuchulainn and his prowess.

Meave persists, and her army, drawn from every part of Ireland save north-east Ulster, sets forth under the guidance of Fergus, but he, though bitterly wronged by Conchobor, has still an overwhelming affection for his land, and misleads the host whilst he secretly warns Ulster. In spite of all, the invaders draw near Ulster's borders, and are beheld from afar by Sualtam and Cuchulainn, who are free from the weakness that overcomes all the other Ulstermen. Cuchulainn refuses to give up a love tryst he has that night, saying that his word has been passed, and must be kept at

all costs. Certain feats, however, he performs, the effects of which fill the invaders with amazement. Nevertheless, they cross the borders. On the morrow, Cuchulainn, following up their tracks, gives a most accurate account of their numbers, and "this was one of the three best estimates ever made in Ireland." Slight skirmishes follow, in which Cuchulainn cuts off and slays the invading scouts, but the host draws near Daire's homestead and would have carried off the Brown Bull, had not the latter, warned by the Morrigu (=the Great Queen, the war-goddess of the ancient Irish), retired with fifty of his heifers into the mountains. Cuchulainn continues to harass the invaders, whom he slays by the hundred at a time, until at last Meave seeks an interview, which he grants. She is greatly disappointed at finding in him but the bulk of a small boy. Her terms he rejects, and slays his hundred every night until the queen accepts his terms; every day he is to meet a warrior of Ireland in single combat; during the fight the invaders may progress unhindered, but must stop as soon as it it finished; food and clothing are to be supplied to him the while.

Combats follow in which, though Cuchulainn is always victorious, he cannot prevent the driving of the Brown Bull into the invader's camp. The Morrigu comes to proffer him her love, but he

urges that his bloom is wasted with hardship and that it is uneasy for him to hold intercourse with a woman so long as he is engaged in such strife. It was like to go hard with him in consequence, for at his next conflict the spurned goddess comes against him as a white-eared heifer, as a black eel, and as a rough grey wolf-bitch, and he is sore pressed to overcome both her and Loch More, with whom he is fighting. But he does so, and grants the dying request of Loch that he may be suffered to rise and fall on his face, and not backwards, towards the men of Erin. "Surely a warrior's boon," answers Cuchulainn.

The Morrigu disguises herself as an old crone, and obtains healing from Cuchulainn of the threefold wound he had inflicted upon her. In the contests that follow faith is broken with Cuchulainn, and he is assailed by numerous adversaries at a time. But one of his fairy kin comes to succour him, throws him into a deep sleep, and takes his place for three days, at the end of which the hero rises refreshed, and avenges fearfully upon the men of Ireland the slaughter of his schoolfellows of Emania who had attacked the invaders in the interval. At length Meave induces Fergus to proceed against Cuchulainn, and the latter consents to retreat on condition that Fergus will do the same another time. Again Meave sends against him Calatin and his twenty-

seven sons, a gang of poisonous wizards. Cuchulainn, hard pressed, is succoured at the right moment by one of the Ulster exiles. At length in despair Meave calls upon Ferdia, an old comrade of Cuchulainn's whilst the latter was learning arms with Scathach. All unwillingly the hero consents, but he does consent, and the two friends meet face to face at the ford. Ferdia asks how his old fag ("his attendant to tie up his spears and prepare his bed") dare stand up against him. All day they fight but without result, and ere they separate for the night each puts his arms round the other's neck, and gives him three kisses. Their horses are in the same paddock, their charioteers at the same fire; and of every herb and healing plant that is applied to the wounds of Cuchulainn he sends an equal portion to Ferdia, that the men of Ireland may not say should the latter fall it was through lack of means of cure. And of every food and pleasant drink brought to Ferdia, he sends a half to Cuchulainn.

On the morrow they fight, but again without result, and again they interchange gifts and courtesies. But on the eve of the third day's fighting their parting is mournful, sorrowful, disheartened. The fourth day dawns, and each knows that one of them would fall there that day, or that both of them would fall. Terrible is the fight, and Cuchulainn must needs have re-

course to the mysterious *gae bulga* before Ferdia falls. "It did not behove thee that I should fall by thy hand," says the dying warrior. "Then Cuchulainn ran towards him, and clasped his two arms about him, and brought him across the ford that he might not be with the men of Erin. And he began to lament and mourn for Ferdia, and to utter a panegyric over him—

> "Dear to me was thy beautiful ruddiness,
> Dear to me thy perfect form,
> Dear to me thy clear grey-blue eye,
> Dear to me thy wisdom and thine eloquence."

"We will leave now, my friend Laegh," says the hero, "but every other combat and fight that ever I have made was but a game or a sport compared to the combat and the fight of Ferdia."

After this Cuchulainn is borne away to be healed of his wounds, and divers of the Ulstermen come to keep up the conflict, until at last Sualtam succeeds in arousing Conchobor, and the king, summoning all Ulster, moves against the invaders. In the great and terrible battles that ensue, the fortunes of war are balanced until Cuchulainn, escaping from his leeches, rushes to the field. Fergus retreats before him, as he had pledged his word, and the men of Ireland withdraw from Ulster. But Meave carries off the Brown Bull, "whoso might or might not come to Connaught, at all costs the Bull should do so."

The rivals meet, the Brown Bull is victorious and returns to his own land, but his heart bursts, and vomiting black mountains of dark red gore, he expires.

This, then, was the hosting of the men of Ireland for the driving of the kine of Cualgne, and their withstanding by Cuchulainn, and their retreat before the men of Ulster.

**The Death of Cuchulainn.**—Three posthumous sons and three daughters are borne at one birth by the wife of the wizard Calatin. These join with Lugaid, son of Curoi of Munster, with Erc, King of Tara, and with other chiefs whose fathers had been slain by Cuchulainn, and invade the hero's land. As he goes to his last fight he is begirt with terrible omens—the land is filled with smoke and flame, and weapons fall from their racks. His faithful charioteer refuses to harness his steed, the Grey of Macha, and thrice does the horse turn his left side to his master. Then Cuchulainn reproaches him: he was not wont to deal thus with his master. So the Grey of Macha obeys, but as he does so, his big round tears of blood fall on Cuchulainn's feet. In vain do the thrice fifty queens who were in Emain Macha beseech him to stay. He turns his chariot from them, and they give a scream of wailing and lamentation, for they know he will not come to them again.

As he fares onwards he encounters the three daughters of Calatin, as crones blind of the left eye. They are cooking a hound on a spit, and because Cuchulainn will not seem to scorn the offer of poor food, he accepts the flesh they present, although it was a *geis* (taboo) for him to do so. Then he comes in sight of his foes, and he rushes against them. "The halves of their heads and skulls and hands and feet, and their red bones were scattered broadcast throughout the plain in numbers like unto the sand of the sea, and the stars of the heaven; like dewdrops in May; like leaves of the forest, and grass under the feet of the herbs on a summer's day. And grey was that field with their brains after the onslaught which Cuchulainn dealt out to them."

His spear is claimed of him. "I need it myself," says the hero. "I will revile thee if thou givest it not," says his foe. "Never yet have I been reviled because of my niggardliness," and with that Cuchulainn dashes his spear at the claimant, killing him and nine others. But with a cast of that spear Lugaid slays Laegh the charioteer. A second time the claim is made for the spear, and Cuchulainn is threatened that Ulster shall be reviled if he refuses. "Never was Ulster reviled for my churlishness," and again he parts with his weapon, and with it Erc, son of Ireland's high king, makes a cast that lights on

the Grey of Macha, and he and Cuchulainn bid each other farewell. A third time the spear is claimed—Cuchulainn's kin should be defamed if he refuse. "Tidings that my kin has been defamed shall never go back to the land to which I myself shall never return, for little of my life remains to me," and again he parts with his weapon. Then Lugaid seizes it and strikes Cuchulainn, so that his bowels come forth on the cushions of the chariot, and the King of the Heroes of Erin is left dying alone on the plain. "I would fain," says he, "go as far as that loch to drink a drink thereout." "We give thee leave if thou come again." "I will bid you come for me unless I return myself." Then he gathers his bowels into his breast and drinks, and when he has drunk his eye rests upon a pillar stone in the plain; to it he fastens himself by his breast girdle, "that he may not die seated nor lying down, but that he may die standing up." His foes gather round him, but they dare not go to him, thinking him to be yet alive. But in vain does the Grey of Macha return to protect his master, so long as his soul was in him, "and fifty fall by his teeth and thirty by each of his hoofs." Lugaid cuts off Cuchulainn's head, but even in death the hero avenges himself; the sword falls from his right hand and smites off that of Lugaid. They strike off Cuchulainn's right hand in re-

quital, and bear away head and right hand to Tara, where they give them burial.

**How Conall Cearnach Avenged Cuchulainn.**—There was a compact between the two Ulster champions to avenge each other. "If I be the first killed," said Cuchulainn, "how soon wilt thou avenge me?" "On thy death day before its evening." And on his part Cuchulainn swore vengeance before Conall's blood was cold upon the earth.

Conall pursues Lugaid and comes up with him. "I am thy creditor for the slaying of my comrade, and here I stand suing thee for the debt." At Lugaid's request Conall binds one hand to his side that they may fight on equal terms, but in the end overcomes him. "Take my head," says the dying warrior, "and add my realm to thy realm, and my valour to thy valour. I prefer that thou shouldest be the best hero in Erin."

The foregoing incidents are, as may be seen from the Notes, taken from tales independent in themselves, but which allow of a chronological classification, and which fall into their place as component parts of a cycle. There are also other tales which, whilst they cannot so definitely be assigned to a particular period of the hero's life, are obviously of a cyclic character. Thus the fact that Cuchulainn is slain by Lugaid, son of the

Munster chief Curoi mac Daire, cannot but be connected with the tale which presents the Ulster hero as the lover of Blathnait, wife of Curoi, whom he kills. Curiously enough, this story is one of a group which presents Cuchulainn in an unfavourable light; it must, I think, have had its final shaping, if not its origin, in Munster. It is not only that Cuchulainn figures as eloping with another man's wife, and as overcoming the injured husband by stratagem; there was, I think, no matter for reproach in this when the story was framed. But, what is far more grave, he is at first worsted, and worsted ignominiously, and this can only be the version of an inimical clan.

Another story of a cyclic character is unfortunately only known to us by a very late version, although it is alluded to by a tenth-century poet, and is presupposed by the story of Cuchulainn's sojourn in Scathach's isle. It tells of the son born to him by the Amazon Aife, of his journey to Emania to defy the warriors of Ulster, of the concealment of his name, and of the combat between father and son, in which the latter succumbs, revealing his personality when it is too late. Of all the Aryan versions of the father and son combat—woven into the Rustum saga in Persia, into the Dietrich saga in Germany—this is probably the most archaic, and it is an unkind fate which has destroyed the early Irish form of the story.

There also exist a number of episodic tales of which Cuchulainn is the hero. I imply by this that they have no assigned place in the chronological sequence of the tales, and that they might be removed without mutilating the saga as a whole, although their loss would greatly impoverish it. They may very possibly represent an earlier stage of the saga before it had been thrown into cyclic form.

Three of these tales deserve detailed notice, both on account of their intrinsic interest and for the help they afford in determining the true nature of the Cuchulainn legend.

**How Cuchulainn was Wooed by the Sea-God's Queen.**—One of these tales, known as the *Sick-bed of Cuchulainn*, tells of Fann, wife of Manannan mac Lir, the Irish Poseidon, and of her love for the hero. She and her sister visit the Ulster court in bird guise. Cuchulainn tries to kill them as a present for Emer, but fails. At night he is visited by two women magnificently clad, each armed with a horse-switch. They smile and strike him, continuing until they leave him nearly dead, in which state he lies for a year, speechless. A messenger comes to promise him healing if he will accept Fann's invitation to go to her land. Cuchulainn first sends his charioteer, Laeg, who returns after a while with the most glowing description of the exquisite beauty and

manifold delights of Fann's country. Cuchulainn proceeds thither himself, aids the goddess's brother-in-law to overcome his foes, and, after passing a month with Fann, returns to Ulster, but appoints a trysting-place for her to join him. But Emer hears of the assignation, and taking with her fifty maidens armed with knives, goes to the appointed place of meeting. Fann appeals to Cuchulainn for protection, and he promises it, in spite of Emer's bitter upbraidings—he had dishonoured her before the women of Erin, once they were together in dignity, and might be so again were it pleasing to him. Cuchulainn takes pity upon her, and a generous strife arises between the two women which should give the hero up. The goddess yields to the mortal with the words:—

> "Woe 'tis to give love to one
> If he take no notice of it.
> Better far to be turned away,
> Save one is loved as one loves."

Then Manannan appears, visible only to his immortal wife, who is seized with remorse at his sight, and is minded of their ancient love. She frankly tells him she would prefer Cuchulainn, but as he has abandoned her she will return to her husband. So Manannan shakes his cloak between the two lovers to the end that they should never meet again, and the immortals vanish.

**How Cuchulainn Won the Headship of the Champions of Ulster.**—The famous story known as *Bricriu's Feast* tells how Bricriu of the Poison Tongue, minded, as was his wont, to stir up strife and dissension, incites the charioteers of Cuchulainn, of Conall Cearnach, and of Loagaire Buadach to claim each for his master the *curadmir*, or hero's portion. He also urges the wives of the three champions to claim right of first entry into the banqueting hall. This brings the heroes to blows, as Bricriu had foreseen, and peace is only restored by the proposal of Sencha the lawman to remit the decision to Meave and Ailill. The three heroes journey to the Connaught court, undergo divers trials, in all of which Cuchulainn is pre-eminent, but none of which is accepted as decisive by the other two. They are then sent to Curoi, who is a great wizard as well as a famous warrior. More trials follow, and though Cuchulainn is always successful, yet there is room for dispute. They return to Emania, and one day an ugly, ill-shapen giant appears at the court. He offers to let any one cut off his head on condition of undergoing the same fate on the morrow. The other heroes essay the feat, but when on the morrow the giant returns none the worse and claims fulfilment of the bargain, they go back upon their word. Cuchulainn alone keeps his pledged faith, and after being tried to the utmost by the giant, is

saluted thus: "Arise, O Cuchulainn! Of the warriors of Ultonia and Erin, no matter their mettle, none is found to be compared with thee in valour, bravery, and truthfulness. The sovranty of the heroes of Erin to thee from this hour forth, and the champion's portion undisputed, and to thy lady the precedence alway of the ladies of Ultonia in the Mead Hall."

**How Patrick called up Cuchulainn from the Dead.**—In spite of Patrick's preaching, Laegaire, High King of Ireland, remains incredulous. He will believe neither in Patrick nor in God, until Cuchulainn be called up in his dignity, as is recorded in the old stories, after which he will believe. "Even this is possible for God," answers Patrick. On the morrow saint and king meet, and the king is speechless until the saint has blessed him, when he describes how Cuchulainn had appeared to him in his chariot. But he is still unsatisfied; he would have liked a longer conversation with the hero. Thereupon Cuchulain appears a second time, performs his chief feats, and exhorts Laegaire to believe in God and holy Patrick. But the king's disbelief will not be conquered until the hero tell of his great deeds. Cuchulainn then tells of his battles against Lochland, and of his capture of Dun Scaith, a fortress full of serpents and monsters, whom he slew, and from which he carried off a wonderful caldron.

He also tells how after death demons carried off his soul, and though he plied the *gae bulga* on them, yet he was crushed into the red charcoal. He winds up by beseeching Patrick to bring him to heaven. The saint grants the boon, and Laegaire believes.

A few words may here be interposed setting forth certain more or less assured results of criticism concerning the date and development of these stories, and the conclusions that may legitimately be drawn as to the age and true nature of the saga as a whole. The section of the above summary which describes Cuchulainn's defence of the Ulster marches is from the tale entitled the *Tain bó Cuailgne*. The distinguished French and German scholars, Mons. d'Arbois de Jubainville and Professor Zimmer, have made it almost certain that this tale substantially assumed, during the first half of the seventh century, the shape under which it has come down to us in eleventh century MSS.; existing texts, which vary considerably among themselves, represent, they hold, modifications of a written original rather than independent transcripts from oral tradition. Granting this, what follows? The *Tain* obviously belongs to a late stage of development of the saga; it gathers up and throws into cyclic form a vast amount of older episodic material. If it belong to the early seventh

century the matter which it codifies and stereotypes must be very much older. Again, our present texts of *Bricriu's Feast* are obviously an amalgam of at least two, and probably four, separate versions which, originally, differed considerably. These versions can be traced back linguistically to the ninth or even eighth century; they must in their turn represent tribal variations of a common theme, which common theme must itself be carried back much earlier. Now, *Bricriu's Feast*, like the *Tain*, cannot belong to an early stage of the saga; it has been romanticised, at times it produces an almost parodistic effect; it necessarily presupposes a much earlier and a well-developed body of literature, and yet, as we have seen, its earliest form can hardly be dated later than the end of the seventh century. The *Demoniac Chariot* (as the tale of Cuchulainn's appearance to Laegaire and Patrick is styled) clinches this contention. Whilst it must of course be later than the introduction of Christianity, it must equally date from a time when it was felt desirable to reconcile the old and new faiths, when belief in and love of Cuchulainn were so vivid and potent as to compel alike his reception by the apostle and his acceptance of the new teaching. If this be granted, it is noteworthy that, as far as actual language and wording go, the *Demoniac Chariot* is decidedly less archaic than many other texts of the cycle, whilst at

the same time the adventures which it records are almost unknown from other sources, and have a strongly mythical aspect.

Thus taking the tales as they stand and applying ordinary critical tests, we are forced to assign them to a period not only far antedating that of their existing transcript (tenth to twelfth century), but also that of their substantial redaction (seventh to eighth century). We may pass to the consideration of the broader issues which they raise with the certainty that we are dealing with material of relatively great antiquity.

One point there is which readers of the foregoing pages will not, I think, require me to labour —the futility of any discussion as to the historical reality of Cuchulainn. It is really indifferent whether a warrior of this name did or did not flourish in Ireland at the beginning of our era. If he did, he did not perform the feats ascribed to him in these tales, for the all-sufficient reason that the feats are superhuman. But although the record is necessarily untrue as involving impossibilities, it may nevertheless be true in the sense of being a faithful reflection of manners and customs, a faithful expression of mood and thought. In this sense I believe the Cuchulainn tales to be true, and, as being true, to be infinitely precious. As do no other surviving monuments they reflect the manners and customs, they

express the mood and thought of the men who sacked Rome and harried Delphi, who founded a state in Asia Minor, and withstood for long years the greatest of the Romans.

It is not often that, as in the present case, a claim such as this can be substantiated decisively, and in a way to be apprehended even by those who have not specially studied the matter. When the Romans first came into contact with the Gauls in the third century B.C., the Gaulish war-chariot impressed them profoundly. Two hundred years later Cæsar found this mode of fighting disused in Gaul proper, the Gaulish warriors having taken to horseback in imitation of the Romans, but on crossing over to Britain he was again confronted by the war-chariot, of which he left the vivid description familiar to every schoolboy. Now Cuchulainn and his fellow-champions invariably fight from the war-chariot, and are thus exponents of a system of military equipment and tactics already obsolete on the Continent in the middle of the first century B.C. The reform which substituted cavalry for chariots probably took place in Ireland towards the close of the first century of our era, and was a consequence of the intercourse between Ireland and Romanised Britain. At all events, in the large number of semi-historic Irish tales of which the scene is laid in the second and subsequent centuries, there is no

longer any mention of the war-chariot. As it would obviously have been impossible for the story-teller of the seventh century to invent a mode of fighting disused for centuries, it is equally obvious that the Cuchulainn tales have in this respect preserved a contemporaneous record of the life they depict. It is more than probable that in other respects their record is equally to be relied upon, and that they do depict with substantial accuracy the life of the warrior and chieftain class in Ireland in the first century of our era, a mode of life which, there can be little doubt, was that of the Continental Celts before they came into contact with the advanced civilisation of Greece and Rome.

This conclusion will appear the more justified when we consider how similar in essentials the life of the Irish Celts of the Cuchulainn period is to that of the Gauls as presented by the classic writers. The predominantly military organisation, the power and status of the war-chief, who would be absolute were it not for the countervailing influence of the wizard or Druid class, the highly-developed clan system which splits the people up into a number of rival and jarring groups, these marked traits of Celtic Ireland may also be discovered on the Continent. But the Continental Celts, warring as they did against more highly-organised foes, had cohesion forced

upon them, and could not but borrow organisation in their turn. Here, again, the Irish Celt of A.D. 1 stands on a more primitive level than the Continental Celt of the second or even third century B.C. In fact, to find his parallel within the Aryan speaking group we must fall back upon the Homeric Greek of 1000 B.C., and if we bear in mind that the Homeric Greek inhabited a richer land, was in contact with ancient, powerful, and wealthy civilisations, and has been depicted for us by poets themselves familiar with a material culture far in advance of anything known to the Irish Celts, we shall yet find the parallel extraordinary close and suggestive. Herding and raiding, such are the bases upon which alike in ancient Ireland and in Homeric Greece the social organism rests; the chiefs are large farmers, surrounded by fighters picked to defend their own and despoil their neighbours' cattle; wealth is expressed in terms of slaves, kine, personal ornaments, and chattels. The differences are for the most part such as naturally arise from the varying advance in culture made by the two peoples: one of the most marked is in the position of women. This was, if we may accept the evidence of the tales, freer and more independent in ancient Ireland than in Homeric Greece. Nor is this to be wondered at: the contact with the East which brought about such a degradation of woman

in historic Greece had already begun in Homeric times. Again, then, we may hold that in this respect the Irish tales take us back to an earlier stage of Aryan custom.

Bearing in mind this fundamental likeness of the two culture groups—Greeks of the Homeric period, say, 1200–900 B.C., Irish Celts of the heroic period, lasting well down into the first centuries of the Christian era—it need not surprise us to find their heroic ideal embodied in such markedly similar forms. In styling Cuchulainn the Irish Achilles, I do but emphasie a parallel which must suggest itself to whomsoever, familiar with the Iliad, familiarises himself with the Irish heroic romances. The parallel carries with it a danger against which the reader must be on guard. Hallowed by two and a half millenniums of reverence and classic use, the work of Homer comes before us with a glamour which, for most of us, distorts our view of his world. That world is barbaric alike in its mode of life and in its conception of life. If we seek for nineteenth-century analogues to Achilles and Cuchulainn, we are probably best advised in turning to the Maories of New Zealand as offering the nearest parallel alike of the conditions and conception of life. In the case of the Irish tribes the parallel is probably very close; the Homeric Greek, as already noted, stood on a higher level as far as the material conditions of life were concerned.

In the comparison, a fair and legitimate one between Achilles and Cuchulainn, the hero of the less advanced, of the more barbaric race suffers nothing from our point of view. In both cases the ideal is, of course, purely warrior-like: the pre-eminent hero cannot but be the chief fighting brave of the race. Superb and fiery courage, passionate and irresistible energy, fierce and utter devotion to the standard of honour recognised by himself and his fellows, such are the dominant traits. Barbarians both are, but magnificent and admirable barbarians, and of the two the hero of the ruder race is nearer to our ideal—more admirable. The Gael is a better gentleman than the Greek. Cuchulainn fighting for his land and tribe is nobler than Achilles fighting in revenge of personal injury. Cuchulainn granting, in admiration, the dying request of his foe, Loch More—"'tis a warrior's boon thou askest"—appeals to our sympathies where Achilles, rejecting Hector's last appeal, repels them. Cuchulainn, lamenting the much-loved comrade of his youth, whom all unwillingly he must needs slay in defence of his land, moves us yet more poignantly than Achilles yielding to the prayer of suppliant Priam. Fate, an unkind fate, has denied us the picture of Achilles' doom, that doom foretold him by his horse, Xanthos of the Glancing Feet, even as the Grey of Macha foreknew the doom of Cuchulainn. It could not, even had it

come down to us limned by the Father of Poetry himself, have surpassed that vision of the King-chief of the Heroes of Erin, self-attached to the immemorial menhir "that he might not die lying or sitting, but that he might die standing up."

There is yet another aspect under which Cuchulainn may be compared with Achilles. In both cases the saga of the mortal, of the hero, has preserved for us, with the necessary modifications due to altered conditions, the legend of an immortal, of a god. At first blush it would seem that the Greek tale, wholly the outcome of pagan times and pagan life, must preserve such a legend far more faithfully than does the Irish. In one sense this is so. The supernatural machinery occupies its proper place in Homer, the gods appear in all their power and splendour. In the Irish tales this element has been almost entirely eliminated, or, where suffered to remain, glossed over, minimised. Could a second or third century story-teller be evoked from the dead and made to recite *his* version of the *Tain* we should certainly find the Great Queen of Battles, the god-sire of Cuchulainn, the deities reincarnated in the two bulls, appearing in the visible might and glory of their god-hood. The partly Christian story-tellers, the Christian scribes of the seventh and following centuries, whilst they altered little and added scarce anything, as far as we can judge, have certainly left

out much. Yet in spite of the obvious difference between the two bodies of legend, it may confidently be urged that Cuchulainn belongs to an earlier, more primitive stage of saga evolution than does Achilles. In the *Iliad*, despite the prominence of the supernatural element, the original myth has been heroicised, suited to human conditions, set within the limits of a historic framework, and thereby compressed, modified, run into new forms, more than is the case with the Cuchulainn stories. In the former, although scholars are agreed in regarding Achilles as the heroic reflection of a mythic prototype, the utmost diversity of opinion has existed as to the nature of that prototype; nor can the current interpretation of him as a personification of the rushing torrent be regarded as securely established or as commanding universal assent. In the case of Cuchulainn no doubt is possible; here, if anywhere, we have the sun-hero, hypostasis, or, as in this case, actual reincarnation of the sun-god; the story of his origin, his adventures and his fate modelled upon and partly reproducing those of his divine original, but modified by their transposition from immortal to mortal conditions, from the realm of divine happenings, dateless, limitless, featureless as that is, to a community of men and women related to each other by definite historic ties, and assigned to a definite historic period.

In asserting the mythic nature of Cuchulainn I do not assert that the tales about him which have come down to us were regarded by their tellers in a symbolic or allegorical light. They and their hearers, as did Homer and his hearers, most certainly believed in the historic reality of their heroes; one of the main causes of the continued popularity of the Cuchulainn stories was that they flattered the pride of the North Irish chiefs, and that for over 500 years the High Kingship of Ireland was, though nominally elective, practically hereditary in the leading North Irish family, the O'Neills. In the tenth century, South Ireland, in the person of the Munsterman Brian, wrested the High Kingship from the North. Had this taken place in the sixth or seventh century, the Cuchulainn saga would in all probability either have been lost, or he would have been the villain rather than the hero of the piece.

In spite, however, of the precise way in which the Irish sun-hero is localised in a particular district and associated with a definite group of quasi-historic personages, it is wonderful with what clearness the outlines of his mythic personality have been preserved, and in how many of his adventures we can detect his mythic nature as the animating and controlling element in the story. In the first place, it should be noted that all the leading characters of the cycle are descendants in the third or

fourth generation of the chief member of the Tuatha de Danann, or ancient Irish god-clan, the Dagda or good god. Long after the Cuchulainn stories had assumed a fixed literary shape, the mediæval Irish annalists turned the Tuatha de Danann into early kings and warriors. The annals represent the Dagda as reigning in Ireland some 1700 years before the date of Fachtna Fathach, his great grandson, according to the stories. But, apart from this fact, which shows how long anterior to the annalistic scheme the stories must be, and how tenaciously they have retained the original framework, the mythic nature of Cuchulainn is self-apparent even in the bare recital of his chief adventures which I have given. Attention may also be called to some features in his personality best explained by reference to his original solar nature. That which practically distinguishes him from every other hero of Irish romance is his capacity, when wrought up into a paroxysm of fury by opposition, of startling and terrific transformation. The passages in which this transformation is described are in the last degree obscure; they were probably unintelligible to the scribes of our present texts, and have suffered from the corruptions to which all archaic and obscure passages are liable in the course of transcription. Translated literally into English, they often have an aspect of ridiculous bombast, redeemed by flashes

of barbaric force and insight. One example may suffice: "Then it was that he suffered his *riastradh*, whereby he became fearsome and many-shaped, a marvellous and hitherto unknown being. All over him, from his crown to the ground, his flesh and every limb and joint . . . quivered as does a tree, yea, a bulrush in mid-current. . . . His mouth was twisted awry until it met his ears. His lion's gnashings caused flashes of fire, each larger than the fleece of a three-year-old wether, to steam from his throat into his mouth. . . . Among the clouds over his head were visible showers and sparks of ruddy fire, which the seething of his savage wrath caused to mount up above him. . . . His hero's paroxysm thrust itself out of his forehead longer and thicker than a warrior's whetstone. Taller, thicker, more rigid, longer than a ship's mast, was the upright jet of dusky blood which shot upwards from his scalp, and then was scattered to the four airts."

It is, I think, legitimate to refer these archaic descriptions of the sun hero "hindered" (the original signification of *riastradh* according to Professor Zimmer) by foe or obstacle to pre-heroic and purely mythical descriptions of the sun-god hindered by cloud and storm-wrack, and assuming unwonted and terrific aspects. They are part of the sun-god's gear bequeathed by him to his hero-son.

In ancient Irish heroic romance the heroes are almost invariably subject to *geasa* (nom. *geis*), taboos, the breaking of which generally heralds or effects the tragic issue of the story. On p. 21 we saw that Cuchulainn broke such a *geis* when he accepted from the daughters of Calatin the flesh of the hound, his namesake. Another of his *geasa* is significant. The Irish sea-god is Manannan mac Lir; it is a *geis* of Cuchulainn's "to see the horses of Manannan, or to hear the harp of Maner's son play soothingly and sweetly." It is taboo for the sun-god to "see the wild white horses foam and fret"; when he does so it is that his course is ended in the western waves.

Miss Hull has summarised so admirably the argument for the mythic nature of Cuchulainn, that I need not apologise for borrowing her words: "He reaches his full development at an unnaturally early age, and even as a boy of seven years he conquers heroes and performs the feats of a prime champion. Small, but comely of person, he waxes in conflict to a prodigious size, a halo shines from his head, the 'bird of valour' flutters over him, a furious heat exudes from his body; he destroys armies by his look; he has power in his eyes to blind the women of Ulster when they look upon him with love. His feats are terrific; he is irresistible both in war and in love. He is bound by his *geasa* to rise before

dawn falls on Emain Macha; he is seldom at rest, for his energy is untiring. He rides a chariot drawn by a black and a grey horse, symbols of day and night. He himself has caught those famous steeds, which have emerged from a magic lake and return thither on the death of their master. On them when caught he scours the plain and rises at a leap over the mountains. Three times without pausing for breath they carry their tamer round the entire circuit of Erin. Such is the Irish conception of the Solar Hero."

One further point, but that of capital importance, should be noted in this connection. The quest of the Brown Bull takes place in winter; the forces of Meave start in October, and from the end of that month until the end of January Cuchulainn has to fight single-handed because the warriors of Ulster lie prostrate in their pains. When Lugaid, Erc, and the sons of Calatin finally overpower the hero, his fellow-warriors are unable to aid him for the same reason; thus his death takes place in winter. It is impossible not to recognise that Cuchulainn's life record is here modelled upon earlier year myths which picture the sun-god assailed or vanquished during the winter season. In the cycle, as we have it, racial and historical elements have been added to the myth; Cuchulainn's adversaries are not simply personifications of cold and darkness; we can detect in the cycle the clash of races, possibly even of

mythologies. The hardest struggle which the hero has to undergo is that with Ferdia, and Ferdia is expressly described as the chief champion of the Firbolgs, a race which preceded the sons of Mil on Irish soil, and which in other tales of a decidedly mythical character is found allied with the Fomori, dark and evil powers, against the Tuatha de Danann, gods of light, and life, and increase.

If this view of Cuchulainn as the sun-hero, the hypostasis of the sun-god, be admitted, it may be asked if traces of his legend exist in Celtdom outside Ireland. Monsieur d'Arbois de Jubainville has interpreted the sculptures on a Gaulish altar found at Paris as illustrative of a sequence of mythic incidents analogous to that set forth in the *Tain bô Cuailgne*. Even if the interpretation be correct it would only prove that the Celts of France had stories about the sun-hero similar to those told by the Celts of Ireland. We cannot speak of a pan-Celtic Cuchulainn. The latter is, I believe, substantially the sun-hero, but the sun-hero localised in a particular district of Ireland, associated with particular Irish tribes, with a particular period and set of events which may or may not be mythical. It is not the features he has in common with other sun heroes, but the *differentia* of his saga which establish his individuality, which make him Cuchulainn.

To sum up. In these stories we have the oldest

Gaelic form of a widespread Aryan hero-myth; in certain respects this Gaelic form is more archaic than can be found elsewhere, is nearer the mythic prototype, is less influenced by the human conditions to which it has been adapted. It is thus of priceless value to the student of heroic myth. To the historian the environment and the material conditions of the saga are perhaps of greater interest. Thanks to the isolation of the Irish Gael, to their escape from the far-reaching influence of Rome, they have preserved for us a polity, a social organisation, a mode of life more archaic than those recorded of any other Aryan people, and of this social organisation, these manners and customs, the Cuchulainn stories are the oldest and, in some respects, the most genuine witness. Finally, they embody the heroic ideal of races which have contributed largely and influentially to the mixed population of the British Isles; they give warrant of a lofty and inspiring, if barbaric, outlook upon life and death, which is in consonance with the little we learn of the Celts from classic writers. If we seek for a commentary upon Cæsar's record of the superb self-sacrifice of Vercingetorix, we shall best find it in what for century after century the ollamhs of Erin told of their *fortissimus heros*, of Cuchulainn.

# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX AND NOTES

THE reader of the foregoing Study who wishes to pursue the subject further should first turn to the following work: *The Cuchullin Saga in Irish Literature*, being a collection of Stories relating to the hero Cuchullin. Translated from the Irish by various Scholars. Compiled and Edited with Introduction and Notes by Eleanor Hull, 1898. The contents of this volume are as under:—

(1) The Birth of Conachar; (2) How Conachar gained the Kingship over Ulster; (3) The Origin of Cuchullin (abridged); (4) The Tragical Death of the Sons of Usnach; (5) The Wooing of Emer (abridged); (6) The Siege of Howth; (7) The Debility of the Ultonian Warriors; (8) The Appearance of the Morrigu to Cuchullin before the Tain bo Cuailgne; (9) The Tain bo Cuailgne: a summary analysis with translation of important passages in full; (10) The Instruction of Cuchullin to a Prince; (11) The great Defeat on the Plain of Muirthemne before Cuchullin's death; (12) The Tragical Death of Cuchullin; (13) The Tragical Death of Conachar; (14) The Phantom Chariot of Cuchullin.

Miss Hull has prefixed an excellent Introduction dealing with the Saga as a whole in its various aspects, and has added careful bibliographical and critical notes.

The present Study and Miss Hull's work fully enable any intelligent reader to form a fair and accurate conception of this body of heroic literature.

FORTISSMUS HEROS SCOTTORUM (page 1).

It may be necessary to say that the Scotti are first heard of as inhabiting Ireland; that they settled in

Western Scotland (heretofore known as Alba) in the fifth century, and that by the eleventh century they imposed their name upon the northern half of the island. Down to the eleventh century Scotia in mediæval texts means Ireland, and not Scotland.

TIGERNACH (page 1).

The *Annals of Tigernach* have been edited and translated by Dr. Whitley Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, vols. xvii., xviii. Tigernach was one of the distinguished native scholars who flourished from 950 to 1100, to whom we owe the *Irish Annals* substantially in their existing form, and also, in all probability, the learned compilations of Irish saga and legend. Tigernach is remarkable among the earlier Irish historical writers for his almost entire disregard of all pre-Christian history save precisely in so far as the kings and warriors who flourished at Emania are concerned.

DATE OF THE STORIES (pages 2, 3).

Almost every story about Cuchulainn is contained in or alluded to in the two oldest Irish MSS., the Book of the Dun Cow, transcribed before 1104, the Book of Leinster, transcribed before 1154. Both MSS. are avowedly transcripts of, or compilations from, older MSS. The Book of the Dun Cow comprises almost certainly, as shown by Prof. Zimmer in his masterly study (*Keltische Studien, V.: Ueber dem compilatorischen Charakter der irischen Sagentexte im sogennanten Lebor na L. Uidhre. Zeitschrift für vgl. Sprachforschung*, vol. xxviii., 1887), the versions of heroic legend made by Flann of Monasterboice, the most learned Irishman of the early eleventh century, and Flann's versions are, as Prof. Zimmer has shown, harmonies of pre-existing versions. In several cases one of the texts used by Flann in his harmony, continued to be copied in its entirety and has been pre-

served by the Book of Leinster or later MSS. Another point which Prof. Zimmer has clearly brought out is the intrusion of glosses into our existing texts; this, of course, presupposes that a scribe, finding the original text partly unintelligible, added glosses in the margin to explain it, and that a later scribe transferred these marginal glosses into the text, a process testifying to a long period of repeated transcribing.

THE FORM OF THE STORIES (page 3).

As a rule, the verse and prose are repetitions of the same portion of the narrative. The same device is used in *Aucassin and Nicolette*, as readers of that charming tale will recollect. But sometimes the verse is complementary to the prose. This is especially the case with passages composed in *rosc*, an abrupt, compressed, irregular metre, which is apparently the earliest kind of Irish verse. Many of the passages in *rosc* are so archaic and obscure as to defy all attempts at translation. Apart from *rosc*, the Irish metres are extremely complicated, and abound in formal difficulties of the most severe nature. In this respect Irish versification transcends even the Provençal Troubadour poetry.

THE HERO'S BIRTH (page 4).

See Miss Hull, No. 3. The versions summarised are found partly in the Book of the Dun Cow, partly in much later MSS., which have, however, preserved an older form of the story than that of the Book of the Dun Cow. I have discussed and illustrated the critical questions involved, *Voyage of Bran*, vol. ii.

THE BOYISH EXPLOITS—THE ASSUMPTION OF ARMS (pages 6–10).

These form an episode of the *Tain bó Cuailgne*. As

soon as the invaders enter Ulster, Fergus recognises Cuchulainn's handiwork, and tells the wondering Connaught court of his youthful prowess. The episode is translated almost in full, Miss Hull, pp. 135–155.

### The Wooing of Emer (pages 10–13).

Two main redactions are known, (*a*) a fragmentary, simple one found in a thirteenth-century MS., but assigned by its editor and translator, Prof. K. Meyer, to the eighth century; (*b*) a longer and fuller one, found in the Book of the Dun Cow and later MS., and probably redacted as late as the tenth century. Redaction (*a*) is edited and translated, *Revue Celtique*, xi. pp. 442–453; redaction (*b*) is translated by Prof. Meyer, *Arch. Review*, vol. i., which translation is reprinted in a modified and abridged form by Miss Hull, pp. 58–84. Prof. Meyer has just edited this text, *Zeit. für Celt. Philologie*, iii. 2.

### The Droit du Seigneur in Ancient Ireland (page 13).

If we may trust, and there is no reason to doubt the evidence of the heroic and historic romances, this right was tenaciously exercised by the early Irish chiefs. But the Wooing of Emer is not the only text which betrays a feeling of aversion and revolt on the part of the inferior chiefs. It may be thought that this feeling is due to the introduction of Christianity, but I believe it to be earlier, and to be symptomatic of the greater power acquired by the lesser chiefs once the Gael had fairly settled down in Ireland and crushed out the resistance of the aboriginal population. The legal fiction by which both the king's right and the champion's susceptibilities are conciliated is interesting as anticipating similar devices of the late feudal period.

HOW CUCHULAINN GUARDED THE MARCHES OF ULSTER (pages 14–20).

Summarised from Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady's summary of the *Tain bó Cuailgne* in Miss Hull, pp. 112–227. The *Tain* has not yet been edited and translated in its entirety, but Prof. Windisch promises an edition shortly. Mr. O'Grady's summary is based upon a late text in which the language has been modernised.

THE STORY OF THE BULLS (page 13).

Summarised from the story known as the *Engendering of the Two Swineherds.* Prof. Windisch has edited this curious tale, *Irische Texte,* iii.; and I have printed an abridged English version, *Voyage of Bran,* vol. ii.

THE DEBILITY OF THE ULTONIANS (page 15).

See for this story, Miss Hull, pp. 97–100.

THE FIGHT WITH FERDIA (page 18).

The Book of Leinster text of this episode of the *Tain* has been printed and translated in full by O'Curry, *Manners and Customs,* vol. iii., pp. 414–463.

THE DEATH OF CUCHULAINN (page 20).

Summarised from Dr. Whitley Stokes' magnificent rendering of the more salient portions of the Book of Leinster version (*Revue Celtique,* vol. iii.). Miss Hull prints an abridgment of Dr. Stokes's rendering, pp. 255–263. She also prints, pp. 237–249, portions of a much younger version. Comparison between the two is very interesting and illustrates the extreme limits of literary development in the Cuchulainn cycle.

THE SICK BED OF CUCHULAINN (page 23).

Edited and translated by O'Curry, *Atlantis*, vols. i. and ii. A complete French translation in M. d'Arbois de Jubainville's *Epopée Celtique en Irlande*. I have given a fuller English summary than in the text, *Voyage of Bran*, vol. i.

BRICRIU'S FEAST (page 27).

Edited and translated by Dr. George Henderson. *Publications of the Irish Text Society*, vol. ii.

THE DEMONIAC CHARIOT OF CUCHULAINN (page 28).

Edited with translation, from the Book of the Dun Cow, by O'Beirne Crowe, *Journal of the Kilkenny Archæological Society*, 1870–71. Crowe's translation has been partly reprinted, with considerable improvements, by Miss Hull, pp. 275–287.

THE DATE OF THE TAIN BÓ CUAILGNE (page 29).

The story runs that by the early seventh century the memory of the Iliad of the Western Gael had faded away, and not an ollamh in Ireland could repeat it. At the entreaty of the head ollamh, Senchan Torpeist, and according to one version, by intercession of the Saints of Ireland, Fergus rises from the dead to narrate the tale, which is forthwith carefully noted, so that never again it may be lost. Senchan Torpeist, an historical personage, was chief ollamh at the date assigned to him by this story, the interpretation put upon which by M. d'Arbois de Jubainville and Prof. Zimmer is undoubtedly correct, namely, that Senchan was the author of a redaction which effectually silenced all competing versions. It is possible even that he was the first to put the tale in writing, and that before his day it had only been preserved orally. All existing texts have been shown to go back to a common original. The

version of the *Finding of the Tain*, which brings in the Saints of Ireland, has been edited and translated by O. Connellan in vol. v. of the Ossianic Society's publications.

CELTDOM AND HOMERIC GREECE (page 34).

See M. d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Cours de Littérature Celtique*, vol. vi.: "La civilisation des Celtes et celle de l'épopée homérique."

THE MYTHIC DESCENT OF THE ULSTER HEROES (page 39).

See the genealogical table, Miss Hull, p. lv.

CUCHULAINN'S DISTORTION (page 41).

Slightly altered from Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady's version, Miss Hull, p. 175. See also Prof. Zimmer's article, "Beiträge zur Erklärung irischer Sagentexte," *Zeit. für Celt. Philologie*, vol. iii. part 2.

POSSIBLE GAULISH TRACES OF CUCHULAINN (page 44).

See M. d'Arbois de Jubainville's article, *Revue Celtique*, vol. xix. p. 245.

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# THE RIGVEDA

[*The numbers in the Text refer to Notes at the end of the Study.*]

THE student of mythology and folk-lore finds the materials of his science either in written records or in popular traditions. In the western world the former seem at first sight to offer the most trustworthy and the most ancient evidence. The epics of Homer and Virgil, the Norse Eddas, and the remains of early Slavonian and Celtic poetry contain innumerable references to popular beliefs; and by the fact that these and other like documents are all moulded in a common type by the forms of language and thought which are called Indo-European or Aryan, our minds are carried back to a period far older than the date at which any single document received its present shape. In this way the study of literature alone leads us to seek for the beginnings of a body of mythology and popular superstition in that early period in which the ancestors of the many Aryan peoples lived side by side, spoke a common language,

and shared the same primitive philosophy of life. But it is not to be forgotten that there are fancies and tales still current in the mouth of the common people, or preserved by comparatively recent records, which carry us back to a much more distant period, and connect the mental history of the Aryan peoples with others far beyond their range.

Since the literary record of popular beliefs is necessarily imperfect, the date of the first written account of a fragment of folk-lore often fails to suggest its true antiquity: nor is the tie of language the only one which determines the history of mankind. As the separate Aryan peoples have come into manifold contact with non-Aryan nations, so also did the parent-stock. We must therefore cease to regard the civilisation in which the ancestors of the Aryan peoples shared as being, in any final sense, universal or primitive.[1] Even if we could reconstruct satisfactorily its language and beliefs, we should be tracing the development of human thought in one stage only of its growth, and in one region only of the inhabited earth. In the same way the literature of each separate Aryan people has its particular historical and geographical limits. In the case of certain texts it may be difficult to discover more than a shadowy outline of the circumstances under which they have reached their present shape; but no criticism of their history is of real value which

does not give the fullest consideration to all indications which we have of the time and place of their origin, and thus endeavour to discover their position in the general history of mankind.

From these principles we are not entitled to depart in the study of the Rigveda. This great collection of the Thousand and One Hymns[2] belongs in language and, in the main, in substance to the western (or European) world, and is by far its oldest literary monument; but it was composed and has been preserved to us by the priestly caste of the Brahmans upon the soil of Asia, and has therefore been specially exposed to contact with Eastern habits of thought. The date of the poems may be determined, though only within very wide limits, by the following considerations. They contain references to a system of astronomy which cannot have been constructed before the year 2800 B.C.[3] Their language is later than the parting of the Aryans of Asia from their parent-stock, and again later than the division of this Asiatic group into a western or Iranian, and an eastern or Indian branch. There are no clear geographical references which indicate that any of the hymns were composed before the latter crossed the mountain barrier of the Hindu Kush, and settled in the valley of the Indus.[4] But, on the other hand, it is only in the very latest hymns that any mention is made of the Ganges: a

long period had yet to elapse before Aryan civilisation established itself in Central India, and in this period many a fresh development of language and literature, many a new stratum of religious and philosophical thought can still be traced. The hymns of the Rigveda were ill-understood survivals of a distant past when the ceremonial system of Brahmanism was in its prime; and that ceremonial system itself was an outworn tradition when, in the sixth century before Christ, the two kindred systems of Buddhism and Jainism had their birth, and rapidly spread their influence over the whole Indian peninsula. Reckoning backwards from this later and fixed date, we can hardly assign a shorter period than the centuries from the tenth to the seventh before Christ for the developments which we can follow upon Indian soil. The period of migration from Western Asia into India must then be within the second millennium before Christ; and if we associate with it all the developments which we can trace within the Rigveda itself, it must have extended over several centuries of that millennium.[5] The common life of the ancestors of the Indians and Iranians must have come to an end early in this millennium, and their contact with Chaldæan[6] or Babylonian astronomy may very probably be assigned to some time earlier than 2000 B.C.

The hymns of the Rigveda, even the latest, are

by this reckoning considerably older than the Homeric poems in the shape in which we now possess them, and immensely older than any other European literature. But this great age must not be exaggerated in imagination: if we turn our eyes from the West to the East, the whole perspective is changed. The picture-galleries of the Egyptian sepulchres, the clay tablets of Babylon, the rock-hewn monuments of Assyria, as well as the astrological lore of the Chaldæans, together carry us back to periods of history amongst which even the earlier Aryan migrations may have been recent events. The Rigveda does not belong to prehistoric times, nor is it the work of primitive or uncivilised man. Its poets had inherited a rich culture from their predecessors, and they designed to extend and deepen it for the benefit of those who should succeed them.[7] In particular, certain standards of religious thought and poetical expression had been established for many centuries, and maintained or improved upon by successive generations of professional students. In this succession the Vedic poets felt themselves to be the latest and most richly endowed company. They inherited a language fully developed, flexible, and clear; they were in touch with the latest discoveries in religion and science; and it is exactly in the earliest parts of the Rigveda that the poets most often record with pride that

they have fashioned a "new" hymn. Of the social position of the bards we can form some opinion from their writings. They lived at the courts of princes, who were perhaps not unlike the brave but moody chieftains of the Homeric poems, and, like them, were engaged in schemes of conquest and in the search for new settlements. In these courts the bards occupied places of high honour: they were practical men who shared in the counsels of the state, and were richly rewarded with its good things. But we have no reason to attribute to them any curiosity with regard to the folk-lore or mythology of their own people, except so far as it might happen to be bound up with the present requirements of state religion. All around them, amongst the common folk, such lore existed then as it exists to-day; but the highly-placed court-poets ignored, perhaps despised it.[8] But in India as elsewhere the progress of the centuries brought change. The clans became settled in their new homes, and their religious worship became stereotyped. The hymns required for the service of the gods needed no additions; and veneration for the old took the place of creative joy in the new. The activity of a still highly intellectual caste found a new outlet in antiquarian and philosophical research. In this later period the poetry of the Rigveda ceases to consist of hymns of worship, and much of it is composed

of more or less dramatic accounts of the history of divine or semi-divine beings. If we do not find a systematic mythology, we have at least a considerable body of mythological material. Of this it is highly probable that a considerable part is very ancient in its substance; but the literary form is beyond all question relatively modern.[9] This point is of great importance as affecting the origin of the tales. Some of these may have travelled, in common with the language, from the original home of the Aryan family; others may have been adopted by the emigrants from the various nations into contact with which their wanderings brought them, or may have been developed by their own speculations during the period of the migration. But except where we have evidence to some such effect, the presumption must always be that these poems embody the folk-lore of the peoples amongst whom the Aryans were now settled as conquerors, that is, of the native population of Northern India; and even if we find elements in common between the later Vedic mythology and that of some part of Europe, we are still often unable to decide in which direction or by what channels of communication a tale has passed from the one continent to the other.[10]

In the limited space here available we can only deal with a few points in this wide field of inquiry. We propose to consider first the earliest

hymns in the Rigveda, giving some account both of their literary form and of their substance. Having thus formed for ourselves a general conception of the religious worship of the Indo-Aryans at this period, we shall be able to compare it with that maintained by their nearest kin, the Iranians, at a like time; and from this starting-point to trace, to some extent, the earlier history of the beliefs and practices embodied in both. Afterwards an account will be given of a few of those myths which abound in the later hymns of the Rigveda, but which we can seldom trace backwards, even so far as the earlier hymns. Of these myths generally we can only say that such and such were the tales that were current in Northern India a thousand years before the Christian era.

The earliest hymns of the Rigveda, if collected in a single volume, would be in bulk and general appearance not unlike an English metrical version of the Book of Psalms. According to the distinction made in the Brahmanic schools, the hymns are of two kinds, "song" or lyrical verse, and "recitation" or epic verse. The lyrical metres resemble those in which modern hymns are composed, with their variation of "short," "long," "common," and "peculiar" measure. The stanza usually consists of four lines or "verses," and its character depends upon the length of the different

verses. These may be all equal, or the alternate verses may agree, or one of the four may stand in contrast to the other three. But whilst in the modern metres a line most commonly contains six or eight syllables, the lyric verse of the Rigveda contains either eight or twelve. Rhyme is unknown in the Rigveda, as in Greek and Latin poetry, and even alliteration is rare. The internal structure of each verse depends, as in Greek and Latin poetry, upon the succession of "short" and "long" syllables; for though the accent is carefully marked, it seems independent of the metrical arrangement. The last syllable of each verse may be indifferently short or long, but otherwise the rules of Vedic poetry prescribe generally that the even syllables must be long, and thus give to all the lyric metres a prevailing Iambic rhythm, which is more strictly marked as the end of the verse is approached. But at no point are the rules of quantity absolutely rigid, and in this way the comparatively simple Vedic metres escape the somewhat mechanical and monotonous effect which is felt in reading the odes of Horace. The number of metres is considerable: the shortest is the *Ushnih* (8 8 12), the most elaborate the *Atyashti* (12 12, 8 8 8, 12 8), and perhaps the most favourite the alternation of *Brihati* (8 8 12 8) with *Satobrihati* (12 8 12 8). It is a reasonable conjecture that all these forms

are variations of an original stanza, consisting of four equal lines of eight syllables (8 8 8 8). Such a stanza is found in the early Rigveda, and is called *Anushtubh;* and this, as well as all the other metres of this class, disappears almost entirely from use in the later periods of the Rigveda.[11] Thus the lyrical hymns of the Rigveda have preserved for us the latest productions of a type of poetic art which had perhaps reached its prime at an earlier date. With the epic hymns the contrary is the case. For these the standard metre is the *Trishtubh;* it consists of stanzas composed of four equal verses of eleven syllables. As the number of syllables is uneven, the rhythm appears to be Iambic at the beginning of the verse, and Trochaic at the end; and this contrast is artificially heightened by the well-marked break or "cæsura" which divides each verse into two parts, and by other devices. In the earlier hymns it is quite common to find Trishtubh verses which contain no more than ten or even nine syllables, and though the irregularities can in some cases be explained, it is certain that this metre reaches a more clearly defined and highly polished form in the hymns of a later period. It therefore represents a type which was growing in favour with the poets and their hearers. But on the whole we may say that the earliest Vedic metres represent a high development of poetic

art. A rude form of the Anushtubh and Trishtubh verse, in which the quantity of the syllables is ignored, but their number strictly maintained, is found in the Zend-Avesta. We are thus able to trace the outline of the Vedic metres to the Indo-Iranian period, whilst the fundamental principles of versification, being shared by Greeks and Latins, presumably go back to the time before the first Aryan migrations.

In their content the early Vedic hymns present again many points of resemblance with the Book of Psalms. It is true that they are composed in honour of many deities, and for the use of many clans; and that they therefore lack the unity of poems which proclaim the glory of a single God, and are associated with a single state. On the other hand, there are three points which the two collections have in common. They reflect the national, and, to some extent, the personal interests of their composers; or they dwell upon the majesty of the never-changing law of the universe, both in its moral and its physical aspect; or they exalt the dignity of the acts of worship and sacrifice and their accompanying ritual. In the Rigveda these three strains of emotion are seldom kept altogether separate, but the relative importance of each varies from hymn to hymn. The national interest is most prominent in the hymns which contain references to wars, either between

the Aryan and the unbeliever, or between two Aryan clans; and such hymns are most frequently addressed to Indra, the national god of war and the traditional protector and enricher of his worshippers. In the hymn, of which a translation follows, the worshipper evidently fears that the god may, from prudential motives, side with his opponent. He therefore reminds Indra that his power is unlimited, and asks that it may be used in his favour. In the concluding verse the bards do not scruple to request that a fair share of the fruits of victory may be reserved for themselves. The original hymn is in the Trishtubh metre.

### Rigveda i. 63.

### To Indra.

1. Great art thou, Indra, who at thy birth didst make heaven and earth to quake for fear: even the strong mountains shook for fear of thee like a dust-cloud.

2. When thou dravest forth thy bays, Indra, for the raid, thy worshippers set the club in thy hands; with this thou brakest down many strongholds of the foe: many call to thee for aid, and none may cross thy will.

5. Very true it is, Indra, that thou comest to no harm, even though a mighty lord amongst men be displeased with thee: make a clear path before

us, Indra, for our war-horses, and with thy mace smite down our enemies.

6. Very true it is, Indra, that the champions appeal to thee in their struggle for water and free space: this thy help is worth competing for, Indra, when the lordship is to be determined by battle.

7. Very true it is, Indra, that to help Purukutsa thou didst join in the strife with thy club, and didst break open seven castles: then didst thou toss aside in disdain the offering of Sudas, but madest a free way for the Puru king out of his trouble.

9. This song is dedicated to thee, Indra, by the bards of the Gotama clan; it is recited amidst prostrations in thy honour, who drivest the pair of bays: obtain thou for us too the prize of gold and of red cattle: come to us early in the morning in generous mood.

The hymn next quoted is addressed to Agni, the deity of the sacrificial fire, but it is even richer in historical allusions, and the god assumes for the time being the attributes of a warrior. The references have all to do with conflicts between the invaders and native tribes, who are regarded as relying upon magic and impious arts. It is not possible to say whether the praise of the god, and the appeals made to him, contain any reference to

the use of fire-signals as guides to the allied Aryan forces, or whether the god's help is conceived as entirely supernatural. In the translation of this hymn into English verse I have endeavoured to indicate the general structure of the Brihati and Satobrihati stanzas, which are here used alternately; every such attempt must necessarily involve some sacrifice of accuracy in translation, and cannot altogether reproduce the metrical effect of the original.

RIGVEDA i. 36; 15–20.

TO AGNI.

Bright-gleaming warrior lord,
Protect us in the fray
From this dense devilish heathen horde
And all that scheme to slay.

They plot us harm the live-long night,
"Their gods are naught," they boast;
Strike, Agni, hard, nor spare thy might
To wreck the perjured host.

Thou leddest out of old
For glory, land, and loot,
Mitra and Medhya, riders bold,
And kingly Upastut.

And now by Agni's help from far
We summon Turvash here:
For Black-man's-terror[12] in his war
Has need of comrades dear.

Bright burns the flame within
Since Manu bade thee come
To take us Kanvas for thy kin,
And make our land thy home:

A welcome light to loyal hearts,
But terrible to face
For those that deal in magic arts,
And all the Atri race.

With these warlike hymns we may contrast those which are addressed to deities which represent the universal order, of whom the pair Mitra and Varuna are the most prominent. These gods are seldom separated in the Rigveda; by their law the sun rises daily in the east, the rain pours down from the sky, and the rivers from the mountains; their watchmen mark men's doings, and their wrath is swift upon those who break their pledged word. But to these gods war is abhorrent; far from siding with one Aryan clan against another, we find their arms outstretched to protect the *two* peoples that do not agree, the white and the dark-skinned races.* Many modern

* According to a probable interpretation of Rv. vi. 67. 1.

commentators have selected one of these deities as illustrating a monotheistic sentiment in Vedic poetry; but in the earliest hymns of the Rigveda we most commonly find a third god, Aryaman, associated with them, and frequently such other names as Savitar, Bhaga, Daksha, or Ansa. It is most probable, therefore, that we have to do with an original group of equal deities, and that they should be identified with the Adityas or celestial deities, to which a later tradition often refers as seven in number. With them the Rigveda associates a mother, Aditi,[13] whose traits are the same as those of her children. It would seem that the worship of these deities was already decaying in the earliest Vedic period, and that many of them were then falling into oblivion, except so far as they might still be recorded in catalogues of names. In a late Vedic hymn we find that Indra boasts that he has dethroned Varuna, and invites Agni to enter his own service instead. We may justly infer from all these circumstances that the worship of the "celestials" occupied at one time in the history of the race a position of greater importance than its place in the Rigveda directly suggests: for the hymns addressed to the gods of this group are comparatively few in number, and of these a large proportion belong to a single collection. From this we take the following hymn as an illustration:—

## Rigveda vii. 66.

### To Mitra and Varuna.

1. To the gods Mitra and Varuṇa let our praise go forth with power, with all reverence to the two of mighty race.

2. These did the gods establish in royal power over themselves, because they were wise and the children of wisdom, and because they excelled in power.

3. They are protectors of hearth and home, of life and strength; Mitra and Varuna, prosper the meditations of your worshippers.

4. As the sun rises to-day free from spot, so may Mitra and Aryaman, Savitar and Bhaga, send us on our way free from sin.

5. Prosperous be this house; speed us on our way, bounteous gods, for you alone carry us past troubles.

6. A mighty rule do ye uphold, for in your law there is no deceit; no viceroys are ye, nor Aditi your mother.

7. As the sun rises to-day do I salute Mitra and Varuna, and glorious Aryaman.

8. These gifts of gold and of inspired song seek after a strength that fears no foe, after a true accomplishment of the sacrifice.

9. Such be ever our aim, Varuna, the aim, Mitra, of priests and worshippers alike: the blessings of heaven are our desire.

The honour due to sacrificial ceremonies is represented by the hymns addressed to Agni, the god of the sacred fire, and to Soma, the sacred drink. Of these, Agni is the priest common to gods and men: he it is who brings the gods to the feast prepared for them by their kinsmen amongst men, or conveys the offerings to them. Rekindled daily as the dawn breaks, he is at once the oldest and the youngest of the company; and to guests human and divine alike his cheerful face and merry chatter are always welcome. The hymns to Soma are of a monotonous character, consisting almost entirely of rather vague references to the process of the preparation of the sacred juice. References to the milk, butter, and cake which form essential parts of the offering are frequent, though these are not deified, at any rate in the early Rigveda. We learn further that an "animal," apparently an ox or a sheep, was also offered; but this part of the sacrifice finds a remarkably small place in the hymns, and was perhaps exceptional. The general character and purpose of the sacrificial rite seems to be plainly indicated, and to be the same as among the neighbouring Semitic peoples. It is a celebration of the ties of kindred (which include both gods and men) by eating and drinking together. But the form of those parts of the ceremony on which the Vedic poets laid most stress seems to

indicate that the gods whose company was sought were dwellers in an upper region: to them the flame and its smoke ascends, to them the songs find a way through the air, to them the intoxicating drink seems for the moment to uplift the worshipper. It follows that the sacrifice may properly be made in honour of such deities as Mitra and Varuna, and others that dwell in heaven; but that the warrior Indra and the sacrificial implements Agni and Soma can only become the objects of the sacrifice by some kind of straining of its original meaning; in the language of the later Rigveda, they "obtained a share" of the sacrifice, whilst other deities had a natural right to it. It is consistent with this that whilst Agni is often asked to bring Indra and indeed himself to the sacrifice, yet in the earliest hymns the gods most regularly invited by name are Mitra, Varuna, and Aryaman. In no hymns, however, have we any sign that the worship paid to these or any other deities was exclusive; the festal table of the Aryan in India had always a place for the supernatural visitant, and no curious investigation of his rank was made.

If we now turn to the Iranian records we find the system profoundly modified. A supreme deity—Ahura Mazdā, the All-wise Lord, is at the head of a council of seven Holy Immortals, or "archangels." The remaining archangels bear

the names of abstract principles—the Good Mind, the True Law, the Blessed Kingdom, the Holy Obedience, Salvation, and Immortality. Equal in rank, but not counted as one of the seven, is Mithra, the Vedic Mitra, who by his close association with the sun further recalls the functions of the Vedic Adityas. The names of the gods Indra and Agni are practically unknown, but there exists a "dragon-slayer," who recalls the warlike activities of the former, whilst a reverence for fire as a sacred element and symbol characterises this as well as later developments of Persian religion. The god Soma, or, in the Iranian form, Haoma, occupies practically the same place, and is addressed in almost the same terms in both systems. We must conclude that the ceremonial forms were more fixed in both nationalities than the titles and functions of the gods whom they honoured; and whilst we are so far left in doubt whether the Persians have superimposed a supreme god on the polytheistic system, or the Indians have allowed the keystone of their own creed to pass into oblivion, we may be sure that the daily use of the fire and sacred drink as sacramental emblems had become a definite part of the national life of both peoples before they separated, and that no theorist or reformer had the wish or the power to loosen their hold on the imagination.[14]

We can trace back the sevenfold celestial deity no further in the early Aryan history, for the favourite etymology which connects Varuna with the Greek Οὐρανὸς is devoid of all sound foundation.[15] But a similar group of seven is associated with our present everyday life in the names of the days of the week, which, in their Latin forms at least, are called after the seven heavenly bodies, sun, moon, and planets. This measurement of time, unknown to the western world before the Christian era, was in use amongst the Babylonians thousands of years earlier; and it can hardly be doubted that the Indo-Iranians borrowed its outlines from them or some neighbouring Asiatic people. But it by no means follows that we can identify Mitra with the sun, Varuna with the moon,[16] and so forth. Such a method obviously breaks down in the Iranian system, and finds no support in the description of any of the deities in the Rigveda. Even if we allow that the group of seven was astronomical in its origin (as seems probable), the moral element had come to outweigh the physical, without entirely superseding it, in the Indo-Iranian period.

We thus arrive at the remarkable result that none of the deities most prominent in the early Vedic hymns were gods of the Aryans before their separation by the same titles and with the same functions. Amongst the lesser deities we

find many that have European analogues, the twin riders (Açvins) in the Dioskouroi, Pūshan the Guide in Hermes, and Rudra in the mischievous Faun. Other figures of the Vedic Pantheon, such as the Dragon of the Deep, the Goat with one Foot, and the Son of the Waters, are more mysterious. A dragon-slayer or giant-killer seems to be part of the tradition of every European people, but the conception is that of a hero rather than that of a god. There remain two figures which belong unquestionably to the whole Aryan family: Dyaus, the Sky-god, in Greek Ζεύς, in Latin Jove, the king of the gods in classical mythology, and Ushas, the Dawn, identical with Ἠώς or Aurora. Here, if anywhere, we find the gods in whose honour the Aryan legislator whom the Indians call Manu first caused the sacred fire to be lit by the friction of hard and soft wood, and for whom the nectar was first squeezed out by priestly hands between the press-stones. That the sky-god originally held a supreme position amongst the ancestors of the Indian Aryans is very probably indicated by the titles *Asura*, "lord," and *Pitar*, "father," with which the Veda still honours him.[17] On the other hand, the Dawn (perhaps the only female figure in the Aryan Pantheon) occupies everywhere a subordinate position. She possesses no special powers, and no special favours are asked of her, but to her

unfading youth and beauty gods and men alike pay a ready tribute. In those two deities we seem to have clear evidence of nature-worship in the period of Indo-European unity; but there is very little to show that worship was paid to the sun-god, whose position in all the early literatures is quite secondary. Only the ingenuity of modern interpreters, both Indian and European, has interpolated his figure as an explanation of each of the more obscure deities in turn, but in no case with any approach to proof.

The slaying of the dragon is perhaps the only type of myth which is common to Sanskrit literature with Greek and Roman. But whilst in Greece and Rome, as well as in other European countries, the dragon-slayer is distinctly human, the Indian form of the legend associates him from the earliest times with atmospheric phenomena. Indra is armed with a mace which appears to be the thunderbolt; in the very earliest hymns he is associated in the fight with Vāyu, the wind-spirit, and throughout the Rigveda he is attended by the Maruts, or storm-gods. The treasure which is guarded by the demon consists of cows, which sometimes appear to be terrestrial, and to become the property of the devout worshipper, and at other times to be the clouds which at last pour out their blessings on the country at large. In the traditional allotment of the gods

to the various parts of the universe, Indra becomes king of the atmospheric region; but there is nothing to show that this interpretation is earlier than the separate existence of the Indian Aryans. There are a few other myths which may be traced in the early Rigveda. The most striking is that of the god Vishnu, who sometimes appears in human shape as a companion of Indra, but is distinctively marked as he who makes the "three steps." By this myth the Vedic poet seems to give shape to his ideas of space, and whilst in the first two steps Earth and Heaven seem to be typified, the third step "in the highest place" leads us into a transcendental region, and seems to open up room for the coming phantasies of the Brahmanic philosopher. Hints are also found of a third myth, which connects Dyaus and his daughter Ushas in sexual relationship, and which is interpreted by the native commentators —perhaps rightly—as the beginning of a cosmogony. From these fragments we may dimly conjecture the outlines of an Indo-European mythology, in which all the conceptions most prominent in the Rigveda disappear or are in the background; and the commanding figure is that of the Sky-god, attended by the figures of the Dawn and the Wind, the Thunder and the Storm-cloud, and (it may be) the constellation of the Twins;[18] whilst on a lower platform stand the great hero

benefactors of mankind, the slayer of the dragons and the discoverers of fire and nectar. If such a creed there once was, this too was the conception of a reformer and a sage; and by its side, by all analogies, luxuriated beliefs in tree-spirits and water-spirits, in witchcraft and spells, in fetishes, medicine-men, and tribal deities, of which no certain trace remains.

For to this prehistoric period we have no right to attribute the mythology of the later Rigveda. Between them we find not only the system we have described as that of the early Rigveda, in which the splendour of Mitra, Varuna, and Aryaman is just sinking, whilst that of Indra has reached its zenith, but also intermediate periods of development. First, it would seem, that growth of Soma worship of which the endless repetitions of the ninth book of the Rigveda are evidence, and which suggest to no modern commentator any but purely literary problems. If it was ever accompanied by such artistic development as attended the festivals of Dionysius at Athens, or by social disorders such as Roman history connects with Bacchic societies, or again by the searchings of conscience which appear to have been the secret of the "mysteries" of Alexandrine Greece, no trace remains in the Vedic poems. In the periods that follow, the honour of god Agni seems to grow into a new nature-worship. The poets dwell no

longer merely on the sacrificial flame, or the divine and human groups gathered round it. The fire spreads in their conceptions till it seems to encircle the whole universe, to quiver in the streams, to laugh in the tree-tops, to encircle the firmament, and to find a home in the heart of each individual worshipper, till at last we are not far from the Stoic conception of a Pantheistic deity, the great central and never-dying flame of which each human soul is a part detached.

So far in the hymns of the Rigveda we can trace a slow course of development, but at this point there comes a break. There is a sudden change in the language from a traditional and perhaps now sacred dialect to a colloquial style: in the metre, from carefully constructed though varying forms to a careless and confused mixture. The gods themselves seem no longer to inspire either reverence or affection, but have become the object at one time of a familiarity not far from contempt, at another, of a fear which borders on hatred; and the barbaric dignity of the old hymns is replaced by absurdities and indecencies. But now for the first time we come into contact with a considerable body of mythology. Very frequently the tales take the form of a verse dialogue between two or more actors, the setting of which may have existed in prose form at the time, but must now be inferred from

accounts given in the later literature of the Brahmanas.[19]

The most familiar of the myths is the discovery of Agni in the waters, here given with the substance of the stories, as related in the Brahmanas, as Introduction.

## RIGVEDA X. 51.

### AGNI IN THE WATERS.

BRAHMANAS.—Agni had three elder brothers. They lost their lives in bringing the sacrifice to the gods. Then Agni was afraid, and hid, entering the waters. The gods desiring a boon of him, searched for him. A fish betrayed him; Agni cursed him, and said, "Let them kill you for betraying me." This is why people kill fish. The gods found Agni out, and addressed him: "Come back to us, carry the sacrifice to us." Agni said, "Let me choose a boon. . . ."

1. *The Gods.*—"That was a large and strong bag, Agni, in which you wrapped yourself when you entered the waters; but there was one god, Agni, who saw all your shapes in their many homes."

2. *Agni.*—"Who was it that saw me? how many had he with him, when he saw all my shapes in their many homes? Tell me, Mitra and Varuna, where are all Agni's sacred faggots, by which he made his journey to the gods?"

3. *The Gods.*—"We looked for you, Agni, in

many places, after you had entered the waters and the plants; it was Yama who caught sight of you, for your light streamed through the ten folds of your hiding-place."

4. *Agni.*—"I was shirking the priestly office when I went there; I said, 'The gods shall not put me to work at it'; that was why my shapes were hidden out of sight in many places; I did not mean to be seen on that business of yours."

5. *The Gods.*—"But come, mankind are pious and long to offer; put things straight, and then hide in darkness, Agni; make straight the pathways that lead to the gods, be kind to us, and carry the sacrifice for us."

6. *Agni.*—"My elder brothers went about that business, like a carrier along the high road; and so in fear of that I hid out of sight, Varuna, like a stag out of sight of the bow-string."

7. *The Gods.*—"We offer you immortal life, Agni, so that you may come to no harm when you take to the work; do, then, be kind to us, and carry us our share of the sacrifice, like a nobleman as you are."

8. *Agni.*—"Well, you must give me for my share the preliminary sacrifice and the after-sacrifice, and a rich cut from the meat-offering; and nectar, which is the soul of the waters and the plants; and I'll have the immortality as well, gods."

9. *The Gods.*—"Yours, Agni, be the preliminary sacrifice and the after-sacrifice, and rich cuts from the meat-offering; yours be the whole sacrifice from beginning to end, and before you let the four quarters of the world prostrate themselves."

In this myth we seem to find nothing but a crude materialisation and confusion of the conceptions of the fire-god reached in earlier ages. The next example is of a type so world-wide that it may be primitive.

## RIGVEDA X. 95.

### PURŪRAVAS AND URVAÇĪ.

BRAHMANAS.—Urvaçī was a fairy maid, and loved Purūravas, son of Ila. And she made with him this covenant of marriage: "Three times a day shalt thou give me thy love: against my will thou shalt not come near me; I must not see thee naked. Such is the law of the fairies." And they lived long time together, and she became with child by him. Then her kinsmen said, "It is dull in fairyland without Urvaçī; we must plan something to get her back." By Urvaçī's bed were tied two tiny lambs that Urvaçī loved as her own children. The fairy-men stole one. Urvaçī cried out, "They are stealing my lamb; there is no loyalty and no courage in this land!" The fairy-men stole the other lamb, and again she uttered the same cry. Then thought Purūravas, "How can there be no loyalty and no courage in the land whilst I am here!" To waste no time, he sprang up naked and gave chase. Then the fairy-men produced

a flash of lightning, and Urvaçī saw him naked, as plainly as if it had been daylight. Then she disappeared, and when Purūravas returned she was gone. Distracted by love he wandered till he came to a pool overgrown with the lotus; and on the pool swam the fairy in the shape of a swan. She recognised him, and caused him to know who she was.

1. *Purūravas.*—"My wife, by heaven! stay there a while, wild one, and let us talk together; for even in the old days we had no pleasure, till we had spoken one to the other all our heart."

2. *Urvaçī.*—"What should I do with these words of thine? I sped from you like yesterday's sunrise, never to return. Purūravas, go home again! I am as hard to seize as the wind."

3. *Purūravas.*—"Yes, you were gone as an arrow taken from the quiver, as a racehorse let go to win the prize! It was a cowardly trick when the lightning seemed to flash, and there was a sound as of a lamb bleating."

11. *Urvaçī.*—"It was your bounden duty to be my protector, so much service you had promised me: I gave you as clear a warning as I could on our marriage-day. You will not get me again. Why make useless chatter?"

4. *Purūravas.*—"You were the delight of my father's heart, as you ran at call from his house to mine: you are near now to the home in which you took a pride; my love has been unfailing, and I have longed for a son to be born to us."

5, 7. *Urvaçī.* — "A tender husband you have been to me, and I bear in my body the fruit of your love; the queens of heaven are waiting to tend his birth, and from the immortal springs he shall drink a hero's strength."

12. *Purūravas.*—"If a son is born, would that he might seek his father out, and not weep and lament when he understands all! How can any separate man and wife whilst they are yet of one mind, whilst the household fire still burns and before the children take their parents' place?"

13. *Urvaçī.*—"I will give him comfort when he sheds tears, he shall not lament or weep for lack of tender affection. What is yours in our world I will send on its way to you; now go home, for you will not get me, silly one."

14. *Purūravas.*—"Your worshipper will throw himself from a rock, you will never see him again, for he goes into the unknown world. There he will find rest in the bosom of destruction, and fierce wolves shall devour his body."

15. *Urvaçī.*—"Purūravas, seek not death, and do not let yourself fall from a rock, or nasty wolves devour your body. There is no reality in women's affections; they have no more heart than the hyena."[20]

The Rigveda hints at no further development of the story, and the later authorities vary in

their versions. It is clear that we have a typical folk-lore tale before us; but we can only conjecture for what artistic or didactic purpose it has found a place in the Rigveda. The last verses quoted above seem to treat with a distinct tone of sarcasm the romantic and domestic ideals which have been portrayed with no little pathos in the story as a whole, and seem to me to suggest that the priestly and literary caste found itself in some antagonism to the softer side of the social life around them, and found here an occasion to inculcate indirectly the supreme claims of ceremonialism and philosophy to engage the attention of princes.

In the same literary style we have depicted an episode from the earliest history of mankind, in a dialogue between Yama and his twin-sister Yamī. The name dates back to the Indo-Iranian period; and in Persian literature the brother and sister are parents of the first human beings. In the Rigveda Yama appears distinctively as the first of the spirits of the dead, a character quite reconcilable with his having been the first parent of the living. That the first human pair should be thought of at one moment as brother and sister, and then again as husband and wife, seems to be a logical result of all speculations as to the beginnings of the human race. Similar relationships are familiar in classical mythology, whilst (as we

have seen) even the early Rigveda contains the account of a union still more opposed to social order. The Vedic hymn seems to refer the difficulty to the conflict between the will of two groups of gods; for whilst the sister (who is the temptress) appeals to the design of the gods that so the human race should be commenced, Yama rejects this as a doubtful speculation, which can be no justification for breaking the mighty law of Mitra and Varuna.

### Rigveda x. 10.

### Yama and Yamī.

1. *Yamī.*—"Oh, let me win a comrade to comradeship, now that I have crossed land and sea to meet him! let him begin the succession of father and son, that there may be a race to inhabit the earth for ever."

2. *Yama.*—"Nay, but your comrade desires no such comradeship, that there should be marriage union between kindred; the mighty ones, the sons of the Great Lord, the establishers of the firmament have wakeful eyes."

3. *Yamī.*—"But think! the immortals desire this very thing of thee, so that there may be progeny from the one mortal man; long since has thy heart been joined with mine, now become lord of my body also."

4. *Yama.*—"How shall we now do that which we have never yet done? Shall we speak loud of righteousness and whisper wickedness? The Gandharva in the waters and the river-sprite are parents to us both; there can be no other relationship for us."

5. *Yamī.*—"In the very womb we were designed for husband and wife by the gods that give offspring and shape the unborn child; these are not breaking his laws; Earth and Heaven bear witness to us in this matter."

6. *Yama.*—"Who has sure knowledge of that earliest day? who has seen it with his eyes and can tell of it? Lofty is the law of Mitra and Varuna; how canst thou dare to speak as a temptress?"

7. *Yamī.*—"A deep love for thee, Yama, has come upon me, to share with thee bed and board; I would submit myself to thee as a bride to her spouse, I would put my arms round thee and embrace thee."

8. *Yama.*—"The watchmen of the gods stand never still, nor do they close the eyes; they move to and fro amongst us; go elsewhere, temptress, to find yourself a comrade, put your arms round another, but embrace not me."

11. *Yamī.*—"A brother, indeed, and to pass away without offspring! and a much-loved sister that must wed with the grave! It is love that

compels me, and again, again I say, 'Take me to thy arms and make me thine!'"

12. *Yama.*—"Take thee I will not, nor make thee mine; it is sin, they say, for one to take his sister to wife; find some other than me, and share with him the joys of wedlock, for your brother, dear one, says for ever 'no' to this."

In no hymn do we find the celestial deities more closely identified with the higher social and moral order, and in one expression we almost reach the confession of a monotheistic faith. But the general character of the later hymns is different; the celestial gods are seldom remembered, and Varuna is deposed from heaven to find himself a new home in the ocean, whence by some mysterious magic he still influences the affairs of men. The Aryan who was tormented by illness (in particular, it would seem, by the dropsy) still turned to Varuna and sought relief from the burden of his sins; but in health he relied upon other spiritual powers, willing to help his purposes on easier conditions. The sacred rite ceased to be an invitation to the gods, and became first a bribe and later a compulsion; and the knowledge of the Veda and its metres became a snare or trap manipulated by the priests, by means of which the gods could be compelled to do their will. The latest hymns of the Rigveda are of the nature of

incantations and spells; both in form and matter they are akin to the hymns of the Atharvaveda, or Book of Charms.[21] Philosophical speculation was also growing more active with each generation, and was destined before long to produce movements of importance not only to India, but also to countries far beyond its boundaries.

The conclusions to which we have been led in this study, if supplemented from other similar sources, present to us the following outline of the history of religious thought as a key to the material of the Rigveda. In the period in which the ancestors of the Aryan peoples still formed a single nation, they were united by a system of religion constructed by the wisdom of their statesmen and poets. The supreme objects of worship were principally such natural objects as the Sky, the Dawn, the Twin Stars, and the Storm: next to them stood the human benefactors of the race, the inventors of the arts, those who cleared the ground of monsters, discovered the kindling of fire, and introduced the culture of corn and wine. The state ritual had two principal functions, the kindling of the sacred fire at dawn, and the preparation of an exhilarating drink for the solemn festivals of each clan. The Aryans who migrated to the south, before they parted to become the founders of the Iranian and the Indian peoples respectively, came into contact with nations whose

religious beliefs were dominated by the results of scientific observation of the movements of the heavenly bodies. Amongst these nations the highest worship was paid to a group of seven deities, associated on the one hand with the Sun, Moon, and five known planets, and on the other hand with the conception of a single unchangeable Order of the Universe, including the physical and the moral law. The Indo-Iranians engrafted upon their own religious system the belief in a sevenfold moral and celestial deity, but without accepting or even attending to its astronomical basis. The results of this change were very different in the two divisions into which this people now separated. Amongst the Iranians the new belief became associated with a monotheistic propaganda, which was to some extent in conflict with it in form, but was fully in harmony with its spirit; whilst amongst the Aryans in India it shook the respect hitherto paid to the ancient national deities, but did not itself take firm root in the convictions of the people. Thus the Indian Pantheon became unsettled, and its doors were thrown open to a succession of new claimants. Meanwhile the ritual remained in force amongst both peoples, and its essential features were little altered by the shifting of the creed. Amongst the Indians it soon acquired a sanctity altogether independent of the deities in whose honour it was

from time to time celebrated; and in this sanctity the professional priesthood, now hardening into a caste, claimed a full share. Under the guidance of the priesthood, religion, which had already degenerated into ritualism, concluded an unholy alliance with legend, magic, and superstition, against all of which it had in its purer days waged war. It placed the sacred art of poetry at their service, and thus for the first time gave literary shape to a mass of primitive beliefs and practices, which in their origin are far earlier than even the religion of the united Aryan people, but which are not, so far as we know, the special creation of this people, or of any of its branches. The priestly caste found in a degraded religion and a reinvigorated magic instruments by which they subjected the kings and the peoples of India alike to an intolerable yoke, until the Buddha, the Enlightened One, cut at the roots of both growths at one time, and gave India centuries of peaceful development, during which there existed no fear of the gods, but much love towards one's neighbour. Of a large part of this history the hymns of the Rigveda give us a contemporary record. Of its earliest chapters they contain recollections, and of its latest at times some anticipation.

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## I. TRANSLATIONS.

Besides translations of select hymns, there are five translations of the Rigveda aiming at completeness accessible to European students.

(1.) *Rigveda Sanhita:* a Collection of Ancient Hindu Hymns. Translated from the original Sanskrit by H. H. Wilson. Vol. i., second edition, Trübner & Co., 1866. Vols. ii., iii., Allen & Co., 1854, 1857. Vols. iv., v., edited by E. B. Cowell, and vol. vi., edited by W. F. Webster. Trübner & Co., 1866 and 1888. This translation follows the interpretations of native commentators.

(2.) *Der Rigveda*, oder die heiligen Hymnen der Brahmana, in's Deutsche übersetzt, mit Commentar, von Alfred Ludwig. 6 Bände, Prag, Wien, Leipzig, 1876–1886. This is the most scholarly translation yet completed, and the commentary includes a mass of illustration from later Sanskrit writers.

(3.) *Rigveda*, übersetzt von Hermann Grassman. 2 Bände, Leipzig, 1876–1877. This translation follows a method of interpretation in which undue weight is given to the conjectures of comparative philology; but being written in verse, and generally in a simple style, it gives the general reader a very good idea of the character and content of the Vedic hymns.

(4.) *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, translated, with a popular commentary, by Ralph T. H. Griffith, formerly Principal of Benares College. 4 vols. Benares, E. J. Lazarus & Co., 1889–1892. An English verse translation based upon the work of the German scholars named above and others.

(5.) *Vedic Hymns:* Sacred Books of the East. (i.) Part I. (vol. xxxii.); Hymns to the Maruts or Storm-gods, translated by F. Max Müller. Oxford, 1869. (ii.) Part II. Hymns to Agni (part), translated by Hermann Olden-

berg, Oxford, 1897. Of these two volumes, the former contains an interesting record of the speculations of a former generation, whilst the latter represents the present state of Vedic studies. Unfortunately the commentary is planned upon a scale which is inadequate for any real discussion of difficulties, and the completion of the whole work seems hardly to be contemplated.

No one of these translations can be regarded as trustworthy, nor does it seem that Vedic study has yet reached a stage at which a definitive translation is possible. For the *Atharvaveda*, however, we have in the "Sacred Books of the East" (vol. xlii.) a translation with commentary by Professor Maurice Bloomfield of all the more important hymns, and in this full confidence may be placed.

## II. General Accounts of the Rigveda and Atharvaveda.

The following books give practically all the information needed by students of comparative philology and folklore :—

(1.) *Altindisches Leben ;* die Cultur der Vedischen Arier, von Heinrich Zimmer. Berlin, 1879. A very interesting account of the social conditions of the Vedic people.

(2.) *Die Religion des Veda,* von Hermann Oldenberg. Berlin, 1894. This book is especially recommended to all who desire a fairly full account of Vedic mythology, treated by critical and historical methods. An English translation would be very welcome.

(3.) *Vedic Mythology*, by A. A. Macdonell. Strassburg, 1897. This is an admirably arranged analysis and summary of the mythological material contained in the Rigveda itself, and of the interpretations of native and European scholars. It contains also a very extensive bibliography, and is an indispensable book of reference.

(4.) *History of Sanskrit Literature*, by A. A. Macdonell. London, Heinemann, 1900. About one-third of this volume treats of the Rigveda and its history. The

writer's name is sufficient guarantee for the scholarly character of the book, and the sketch given, though necessarily slight, is clear and interesting. A bibliography is included, on rather different lines to that in the book last mentioned.

(5.) *The Atharvaveda*, by M. Bloomfield. Strassburg, 1899. This book contains a very full account of the material of the Atharvaveda; but the attempt to claim for any part of the Atharvaveda a date synchronous with that of the Rigveda, even in its latest parts, cannot be regarded as successful. The author considers that the Atharvan literature is "to some extent" the result of a blending of the Vedic people with the barbarous aborigines of India; but that, on the other hand, Atharvanic charms are often pervaded by a genuine "Aryan" spirit.

### III. Study of the Rigveda in the Original.

No satisfactory progress in our knowledge of the Rigveda is possible until a larger number of scholars, trained in the strict methods of the study of the Greek and Latin classics, have the enterprise to invade the new world of literature which India has preserved for them. A thorough knowledge of German and of classical Sanskrit are indispensable preliminaries. The following books deal directly with the Rigveda :—

Grammar—

*Sanskrit Grammar*, by W. D. Whitney. Leipzig, 1879. [The only grammar which gives due attention to archaic forms.]

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*Historical Vedic Grammar*, by E. V. Arnold. Separately printed from the Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol. xviii. (1897).

LEXICA—

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*Sanskrit-Wörterbuch in kürzerer Fassung*, by Böhtlingck. St. Petersburg, 1879–1889. [A reduced edition of the former book, omitting the quotations.]

*Wörterbuch zum Rigveda*, by H. Grassmann. Leipzig, 1873. [This includes a complete *Index Verborum* to the Rigveda.]

*Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, by A. A. Macdonell. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1893. [A very convenient dictionary on a smaller scale.]

TEXT—

*Die Hymnen des Rigveda*, by Th. Aufrecht. Second edition. Bonn, 1877. [Transliterated, and thoroughly trustworthy.]

Commentaries are appended to the translations named above, Nos. 2, 3, and 5.

STUDIES—

*Die Hymnen des Rigveda*, by H. Oldenberg. Prolegomena. Berlin, 1888.

*Vedische Studien*, by R. Pischel and Karl F. Geldner. Stuttgart, 1889–1897. [The most original interpretative work of recent years.]

*Varuna und Mitra*, by A. Hillebrandt. Breslau, 1877.

*Vedische Beiträge*, by A. Weber. Sitzungsberichte der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 1894–1900.

*Vedische Mythologie*, by A. Hillebrandt. Part I. Breslau, 1891.

*Dyaus Asura, Ahura Mazdā und die Asuras*, by P. von Bradke. Halle, 1885.

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For fuller bibliographies, see Professor Macdonell's works, Nos. II. 3 and II. 4 above.

# NOTES.

## NOTE 1 (page 2).

This point of view has gained vogue in England in consequence of the eloquent but somewhat one-sided descriptions of Professor Max Müller: *e.g.* in *Rigveda*, vol. i., Preface, p. vii.: "The charm of deciphering step by step the dark and helpless utterances of the early poets of India, and discovering from time to time behind words that for years seemed unintelligible, the simple though strange expressions of primitive thought and primitive faith." Since 1869, when this was written, Vedic scholars have very much widened their outlook, and largely in consequence of the increasing attention paid to folk-lore.

## NOTE 2 (page 3).

The text of the Rigveda, as it has been handed down to us for some two thousand years, contains 1028 hymns arranged in ten books or Mandalas. Of these, about 150 are, in the common opinion, of later date than the rest of the collection, and at any rate can scarcely be described as "hymns." But amongst the remainder a large proportion of those which appear as single hymns are really small collections of hymns; and the number of hymns, originally distinct, contained in the collection is between 1300 and 1400. The description "the Thousand and One Hymns" is therefore an under-statement of the extent of the collection. The great majority of the hymns contain not less than three and not more than fifteen stanzas.

NOTE 3 (page 3).

Attempts have been made to assign a far earlier date to the Rigveda upon astronomical grounds, but without success. I assume here that the system of astronomy carried by the Aryans into India is derived from that to which we owe the grouping of the stars in the Northern Hemisphere into constellations. For the evidence see Weber, *Vedische Beiträge*, No. 7 (1898). An article by Mr. E. Walter Maunder in the *Nineteenth Century* for September 1900 not only explains the grounds upon which the time and place of this grouping are determined, but may also enable the reader to form some idea of the society in which this work was carried out. He writes as follows :—

"Necessarily there is an uncertainty of two or three centuries in the date; but speaking in a broad and general way, the place and date of publication which our picture-book (*i.e.* the ancient system of constellations) bears impressed upon it is N. lat. 39° and 2800 B.C. . . .

"This oldest picture-book of all was designed nearly 5000 years ago by a people dwelling somewhere between the Ægean and the Caspian, which domesticated the bull, the sheep, the goat, the dog, and the horse; which hunted the bear, the lion, and the hare, and used the bow and the spear. Yet a people not merely nomadic, but either maritime themselves or at least acquainted with the ocean and with navigation. They had made not a little progress in astronomy, for they had determined the length of the year, and had carried the science of observation so far that they could recognise the position of the sun relative to the various ecliptic groups of stars. Their religion involved the erection of altars and the rite of sacrifice. They were acquainted with stories of the Fall and the Deluge substantially the same as those preserved to us in the early chapters of Genesis, and they devised many of the constellations to give appropriate

and permanent record of them; no doubt because they were included, as with ourselves, in their sacred history. The people was an organised one, having some definite and recognised authority, whether king, priest, patriarch, or council does not appear; but of that authority the work of constellation-making received beyond doubt the express sanction."

NOTE 4 (page 3).

Dr. Hermann Brunnhofer, in his book *Urgeschichte der Arier* (Leipzig, 1893), endeavours to trace the hymns of the Rigveda northwards to the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. His argument relies mainly upon the identification of geographical names occurring in the Rigveda with those of places north of the Himalayas, and can only rank as an interesting speculation. Even if the identifications are valid, they prove no more than that the poets preserved reminiscences of the earlier history of their people.

NOTE 5 (page 4).

Professor Oldenberg (*Die Religion des Veda*, Einleitung, p. 1) suggests the period from 1200 to 1000 B.C. as roughly indicating the date of the Rigveda, and this is perhaps the last authoritative statement on the subject. In my view it errs, if at all, in assigning to the Rigveda a period of time rather too short and too late.

NOTE 6 (page 4).

The term "Chaldaean" is here used only in a popular sense, to describe the people who originated the astronomical system discussed in Note 3.

NOTE 7 (page 5).

The idea that the Vedic poets studied the page of Nature with open and childlike minds has been so

charmingly expressed by Professor Max Müller, that it is with regret that we have to admit that it contains but a small element of truth. "It is impossible to enter fully into all the thoughts and feelings that passed through the minds of the early poets when they formed names for that far, far East, from whence even the early dawn, the sun, the day, their own life, seemed to spring. A new life flashed up every morning before their eyes, and the fresh breezes of the dawn reached them like greetings wafted across the golden threshold of the sky from the distant lands beyond the mountains, beyond the clouds, beyond the dawn, beyond 'the immortal sea which brought us hither.' The Dawn seemed to them to open golden gates for the sun to pass in triumph, and while those gates were open, their eyes strove in their childish way to pierce beyond the limits of this finite world" (*Lectures on the Science of Language*, Second Series, p. 499).

NOTE 8 (page 6).

Considering the large bulk of the Rigveda, it may seem strange that it should not give us something like a complete picture of the social life of the people amongst whom it was produced; but, in fact, the subject-matter is limited in all directions. From the great scarcity of precise designation for the colours, it has been possible to argue that the Vedic Aryans were colour-blind. Similarly Professor Maurice Bloomfield notices the absence of any specific word in the Rigveda to denote a charm. He adds: "No great importance is to be attached to this silence. The praises to the gods in connection with the great soma-sacrifices, with their prevailing mythical colouring, darkened very often by priestly mysticism, offer but scant occasion for the mention of sorcery, or the plainer practices of every-day life. Yet sorcery and house-practices there were in India at all times" (*Hymns of the Atharva-Veda*, Preface, p. xxx.).

NOTE 9 (page 7).

Roughly speaking, we may say that the Sanskrit of the later Rigveda differs from that of the earlier poems as the Greek of Plato from that of Homer. The difference appears throughout the whole grammatical system, in stems and inflexions of nouns and verbs alike, in the use of the pronouns and particles, and also in the syntax. In all these points, as well as in the use of some hundreds of words, the later poems of the Rigveda stand far nearer to classical Sanskrit than to their predecessors. The subject has been treated by the present writer in Kuhn's *Zeitschrift*, vol. xxxiv. (1896), in an article with the title "Literary Epochs in the Rigveda," and in his "Historical Vedic Grammar" (*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. xviii.).

NOTE 10 (page 7).

The question of the origin of the myths of the later Rigveda is still controverted. One by one, identifications of persons or places connected with these myths with Greek or Latin proper names have been abandoned, and thus the philological evidence for a common origin has disappeared. The "Indian" view is most boldly stated by Professors Pischel and Geldner: "If we consider, first, that the ancient Indo-European gods in the Rigveda have hardly any myths still connected with them, but have either passed into the background (as, for instance, Dyaus) or have gradually disappeared, and, secondly, that the great cycle of myths is grouped round new and purely Indian deities, we are forced to the conclusion that a great disturbance has taken place in the mythology, and that the Vedic Pantheon represents a later stratum, containing a few reminiscences of the ancient Aryan mythology, but, in the main, purely Indian and rooted in Indian folk-lore" (*Vedische Studien*, vol. i. p. xxvii.). In opposition to this view, Professor Oldenberg

maintains that "the Vedic deities, *e.g.* Indra and the Açvins, are figures to which many a new myth has been attached in the Indian period, but which have inherited their main characteristics from an Indo-European past; and similarly Varuna and the Adityas from an Indo-Iranian period" (*Religion des Veda*, p. 36). The difference between these writers is, however, not fundamental; both agree that there is a body of myths which belongs to an "Indian period." The position taken up in the text, that most of these myths of the "Indian period" are immediately derived from the native population of India, cannot be positively demonstrated. Its probability must depend upon the view taken of the character of the Aryan conquest of India. But it should be remembered that the Israelites, after a conquest of Canaan which at least aimed at the extermination of the original inhabitants, showed themselves very prone to accept the superstitions of the conquered people.

NOTE 11 (page 10).

The Anushtubh as used later is quite different in structure. The fact that the "lyric" metres disappear in the later parts of the Rigveda, and are never revived in later Sanskrit literature, affords a strong presumption of the early date of the poems which are composed in these metres. Similarly the fact that certain of the hymns in Trishṭubh metre display an internal structure which is unknown in later Sanskrit, whilst others correspond closely with the classical standard, affords a presumption of the relatively early date of the former. The argument is exactly parallel to that by which an architect assigns a date to an ecclesiastical building by reference to its style. It does not amount to a demonstration, but when confirmed (as it is in the case of the Rigveda) by numerous linguistic indications, it gives the highest degree of probability that internal evidence can ever furnish.

NOTE 12 (page 15).

We find a group of descriptive names given in the Rigveda to warriors successful in their attacks upon the natives: thus, *Dasyu Sahas* (Native-conqueror) here, *Dasyu Vrika* (Wolf to Natives) in Vāl. 7, 1, *Trasadasyu* (Native-scarer), i. 112, 14, etc.

NOTE 13 (page 16).

Professor Max Müller explains Aditi as "the Infinite," viz., "the visible Infinite, visible by the naked eye, the endless expanse beyond the earth, beyond the clouds, beyond the sky." "That," he continues, "was called A-diti, the un-bound, the un-bounded: one might almost say, but for fear of misunderstandings, the Absolute, for it is derived from *diti*, 'bond,' and the negative particle, and meant, therefore, originally what is free from bonds of any kind, whether of space or time, free from physical weakness, free from moral guilt. Such a conception became of necessity a being, a person, a god." This is a characteristic example of etymological speculation in mythology, quite in harmony with the modern Indian spirit. But the fact that in references to the goddess Aditi we have occasionally in the Rigveda some play on the word *dita*, "bound" (there is no such word as *diti*, "bond"), does not prove the derivation of the word Aditi. Professor Macdonell has shown (*Vedic Mythology*, pp. 120–122) that Aditi has only two prominent characteristics—her motherhood and her power of releasing from the bonds of physical suffering and moral guilt. The second characteristic she shares with her children, the Adityas; and it appears to the present writer that Aditi is a mere reflex of her children, the instrument by which a group of allied deities are converted into a family. Professor Macdonell rightly says (*ib.* p. 123), "Aditi, an entirely Indian goddess, is historically younger than

some, at least, of her sons." But this shadowy figure lends itself readily to the support of modern mythological interpretations of every kind.

NOTE 14 (page 20).

The sketch of the Iranian system given here corresponds generally to that which finds expression in the later parts of the Zend Avesta. In the earliest parts, now generally ascribed to Zoroaster himself, we find a pure monotheism, and the "archangels" are as yet no more than the qualities or gifts of the Supreme Being. But the following passage (*Yasht* 19, vv. 14–18) shows that at a comparatively early period after Zoroaster's death there existed a firmly established conception of a group of seven celestial persons, to whom honour was paid as the chief ministers of the Deity, and who are therefore not inappropriately named "archangels" in popular descriptions of the Zoroastrian religion.

YASHT 19.

14. We praise the mighty Royal Majesty, the gift of heaven, the praiseworthy and helpful, which is exalted above all the creation,

15. Which is peculiar to the Holy and Immortal Ones, the Lords whose glance is effective, the lofty, all-powerful, and strong servants of Ahura, who are just and never-dying;

16. Who all seven think alike, all seven speak alike, all seven act alike; who have one thought, one speech, one act, one Lord and Father, even Ahura Mazdā the Creator;

17. Of whom one looks into the soul of another, paying heed to good thoughts, paying heed to good deeds, paying heed to good works, keeping watch over Paradise; whose paths are glittering, when they turn towards the sacrifice;

18. Who are the creators and shapers, the propagators and supervisors, the guardians and protectors of the creatures of Ahura Mazdā.

[Translated after K. GELDNER, *Drei Yasht aus dem Zend Avesta*, Stuttgart, 1884.]

Any theory which connects the Iranian archangels with the Vedic Adityas necessarily assumes that the general conception of the group is older than the list of names attached to it in post-Zoroastrian times. Of this there is independent evidence in the difficulty felt in making up the number of seven. In the Zend Avesta we find Ahura Mazdā himself included amongst the seven, although this method of reckoning is inconsistent with the supremacy given to the latter in the hymn quoted.

A similar difficulty meets us in the position of Mithra. There are passages in the Zend Avesta in which he is coupled with Ahura himself, and the two are described as joint protectors of the human race. In later times he became completely identified with the sun, and his worship (at least in the eyes of foreign observers) superseded or eclipsed that of Ahura Mazdā. But there seems to be no real parallel between the pair Ahura-Mithra and the pair Mitra-Varuna. In the former we find Mithra encroaching on the sole sovereignty of Ahura, in the latter we find Mitra disappearing from sight. Ahura is essentially a sole deity; Varuna at most appears as such only in occasional hymns.

NOTE 15 (page 21).

Of this favourite etymological equation Professor Macdonell says (*Vedic Mythology*, p. 28), "The long-accepted identification of the word (Varuna) with the Greek οὐρανός, though presenting phonetic difficulties, has not been rejected by some recent authorities on comparative philology." The strongest arguments against

the identification are supplied by Professor Macdonell's own account of Varuna as represented in the Rigveda, by which it is clearly shown that this deity cannot be identified with the sky, except by very remote inferences. On the other hand, we can hardly say that Οὐρανός was worshipped as a god by the Greeks.

NOTE 16 (page 21).

The identification of Mitra with the sun is very generally accepted, but has no support in the Rigveda. That of Varuna with the moon is attempted by Professor Oldenberg (*Religion des Veda*, pp. 285–298).

NOTE 17 (page 22).

The name *Asura* is identical with the Iranian *Ahura*, the title of the supreme deity. Its meaning and use in the Rigveda has been much disputed. P. von Bradke (*Dyaus Asura, Ahura Mazdâ, and the Asuras*) gives the following account, which appears to me in its main features sound. Asura is very rarely used in the plural in the Rigveda: a god who is so described by this epithet appears, for the moment at least, to hold a position of sovereignty amongst the gods. The original application of the epithet will most probably be indicated when it is used of a god who is not at the moment addressed. This is often the case with Dyaus (i. 122, 1; i. 131, 1; iii. 53, 7; vi. 20, 2; viii. 20, 17; x. 92, 6) when referred to alone, but never when he is coupled with Prithivī (Earth). Hence the conclusion that there is a double conception of Dyaus: one as of a personified Lord of the celestial world, corresponding to the Greek Ζεύς; the other of the physical heaven, only slightly personified as one of the pair Earth and Heaven, and so corresponding to the Greek Οὐρανός. The former conception belongs to a pre-Vedic, indeed to the Indo-European period; and this

Dyaus was in that time the supreme deity. The word Asura occasionally stands alone, *e.g.* iii. 29, 11 and 14; viii. 19, 23 and 24; ix. 99, 1: Dyaus Asura is meant. As the naturalistic meaning of Dyaus is little by little forgotten, the figure becomes that of *Divo Asura*, the Lord of Heaven (ii. 1, 6; v. 41, 3), or simply *Asura*, and gradually disappears from notice; whilst the title is transferred, first to the pair Mitra-Varuna (vii. 65, 2, etc.), then to Indra (x. 96, 11, etc.), Agni (x. 11, 6, etc.), and to other gods. In the plural it is only used two or three times of the gods, *e.g.* of the Adityas (viii. 27, 20), and of the Maruts (i. 64, 2).

The Iranians, on the other hand, under the influence of Zoroaster's reforms, treated all their ancestral deities as devils: they therefore ceased to honour Dyaus with the title Asura (Ahura), and transferred it to a purely abstract deity.

In the later parts of the Rigveda, and in the Atharvaveda and the Brāhmanas, the name *Asuras* in the plural denotes a class of beings in conflict with the gods: this use of the word is due to antipathy towards the rival religion of the Iranians, and represents a confusion between the supreme Ahura Mazdā and his attendant archangels.

H. Brunnhofer finds in the invidious use of the word Asura an expression of hostility towards the chief deity of the Assyrians (*Urgeschichte der Arier*, i. p. 216).

### Note 18 (page 24).

This is the interpretation given by Professor Weber to the Vedic Açvins, or twin riders (*Indische Studien*, v., page 234; *zur indischen Religiongeschichte*, page 13, note 3). The Açvins find parallels in the Greek Διὸς κοῦροι, and also in Lithuanian mythology, for which see Macdonell, *Vedische Mythologie*, page 53.

According to other explanations the Açvins represent either the twilight, half dark, half light, or the morning and evening stars.

NOTE 19 (page 27).

The Brahmanas are the earliest body of prose literature in India, and though much later in date than the Rigveda, are written in a language more archaic than classical Sanskrit. They consist of instructions and explanations as to the liturgy. The "sacrifice" appears as an arbitrary collection of mechanical charms, by means of which the gods can be compelled to perform the will of their worshippers. The justification most commonly given for each use is that by its means the gods overcame the Asuras. The following passage is typical :—

"The Asuras performed at the sacrifice all that the Devas performed. The Asuras became thus of equal power with the Devas, and did not yield to them. Thereupon the Devas had a vision of the 'silent praise.' The Asuras, not knowing it, did not perform the 'silent praise.' This 'silent praise' is the latent essence of the hymns. Till then whatever weapons the Devas used against the Asuras, the Asuras used in revenge against them ; but when the Devas had a vision of the 'silent praise,' and raised it as a weapon, the Asuras did not comprehend it. With it the Devas aimed a blow at the Asuras, and defeated them, for they had no comprehension of this weapon. Thereupon the Devas became masters of the Asuras. He who has such a knowledge becomes master of his enemy, adversary, and hater."

NOTE 20 (page 31).

This hymn, like some others in this book, is reproduced in a form rather shorter and more simple than the

original. The translation is based upon that given by Professor Geldner in his very interesting study of this myth (*Vedische Studien*, i. pp. 243–295).

NOTE 21 (page 36).

An English translation of a large part of the Atharva-veda by Professor Maurice Bloomfield has lately been published in the series of the *Sacred Books of the East* (vol. xlii.). From this volume are extracted the following illustrations :—

ATHARVAVEDA, i. 19.—Battle-charm against arrow-wounds.

1. The piercing arrows shall not hit us, nor shall the striking arrows hit us! Far away from us, O Indra, to either side cause the arrow-shower to fall!

2. To either side of us the arrows shall fall, those that have been shot and shall be shot! Ye divine and ye human arrows, pierce ye mine enemies!

3. Be he our own or be he strange, the kinsman or the foreigner, who bear enmity towards us, those enemies of mine Rudra shall pierce with a shower of arrows!

4. Him that rivals us or does not rival us, him that curses us with hate, may all the gods injure: my charm protects me from within!

ATHARVAVEDA, ii. 27.—Charm against opponents in debate, undertaken with the "pātā" plant.

1. May the enemy not win the debate! Thou art mighty and overpowering. Overcome the debate of those that debate against us, render them devoid of force, O plant!

2. An eagle found thee out, a boar dug thee out with his snout. Overcome the debate, etc.

3. Indra placed thee upon his arm in order to overthrow the Asuras. Overcome the debate, etc.

4. Indra did eat the pātā plant, in order to overthrow Asuras. Overcome the debate, etc.

5. By means of thee I shall conquer the enemy, as Indra (conquered) the Sālāvrikas. Overcome the debate, etc.

7. Overcome thou the debate of him that is hostile to us, O Indra! Encourage us with thy might! Render me superior in debate!

THE END

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# THE

# CHARLEMAGNE ROMANCES

"*Ne sont que trois matières à nul home entendant*
*De France, de Bretagne, et de Rome le grant.*"

THE Middle Ages were, as we know, the ages of Romance; Romance embodied in Prose—pseudo-historic chronicles, pseudo-biographical accounts of noted heroes; in Poetry—short *lais*, longer poems (metrical romances as we call them), some independent, the greater number falling into groups round some one central figure, and in their entirety forming what we call cycles of Romance. To the mind of a writer of the twelfth century, whose words are quoted above (Jean Bodel, author of *La Chanson des Saisnes*), there were three of such cycles, and to them alone might the attention of a poet of that day be worthily directed; and of these cycles the respective centres were Charlemagne, Arthur, and Alexander.

To-day this seems a somewhat inadequate method of classification, ignoring as it does the great mass of Northern tradition (Siegfried is

surely a hero worthy of attention), yet it provides those who pursue the study of mediæval literature with a useful formula of designation for the two great bodies of French romance, the cycles of Charlemagne and of Arthur; the *Matières* of France and of Britain.

In the introductory number of these studies the Charlemagne romances have been alluded to, and incidentally discussed, but the subject matter of the study, *The Influence of Celtic upon Mediœval Romance*, was naturally far more closely connected with the second branch of Romantic literature, the Arthurian cycle; with Charlemagne Celtic legend has but little to do. In its later stages, when the *Matière de France* came into contact with the Arthurian story, the very soul of which is Celtic, it borrowed certain features from the *Matière de Bretagne*, but even then the fairy element, inseparable from the latter, presents itself partially, at least, under a Teutonic form. It was the *Matière de Bretagne* rather than that of France which was discussed in the opening study of this series. In a later study the various romances constituting the Arthurian cycle were described and classified,[1] and before the series is concluded it is to be hoped that one upon the Grail romances will complete the introduction to

[1] No. 4, King Arthur and his Knights.

the study of Arthurian literature; but so far the Charlemagne cycle has not received the notice which its importance demands.

It is natural that alike to English writers and English readers the cycle which Jean Bodel reckoned second in value should stand first in charm and attraction; indeed, it may be doubted whether those for whom he wrote did not judge even as we do; in purely *literary* value the Arthurian cycle is probably superior to that of Charlemagne; the latter can count on its roll no such names as those of Chrétien de Troyes, Hartmann von Aue, or Wolfram von Eschenbach.[1]

So far as the French literary presentment is concerned, the Charlemagne cycle is the elder, and the poems composing it, though the versions that have descended to us are not the earliest versions of the tales they tell, are as a rule cast in a form more primitive than that adopted by the writers of the Arthurian cycle. The prevailing form of the French Arthurian romance, one not found before the twelfth century, is a poem of eight syllabic lines, each pair rhyming; whereas in the Charlemagne *Chansons de Geste* we find *laisses* or *tirades* of varying length distinguished by a monorhyme, with, in the earliest copies, a vowel asso-

[1] In saying this I do not ignore the high epic value of the *Chanson de Roland*, I rather refer to a conscious effort after perfection of literary form.

nance prevailing throughout the *laisse*. This metrical form may be compared with the alliterative verse which in the Germanic languages was replaced by various forms of the rhyming couplet or stanza. Yet, in so far as the subject matter is concerned, dealing as it does largely with mythic and pre-historic elements, the Arthurian cycle may be deemed the older.

Before entering into a detailed discussion of the romances dealing with the *Matière de France*, it will, I think, be not unprofitable to make clear to our own minds the distinctive characteristics of these two great bodies of romance; both of them of extreme importance in the history of literature, yet differing so widely the one from the other that even where they have come into contact the influence resultant has been of the slightest and most superficial character. In general terms we may express this difference by saying that the groundwork of the Arthurian cycle is mainly mythical, that of the Charlemagne cycle mainly historical. This does not imply that there are no historical elements in the former cycle, and no mythical in the latter, or that, as contrasted with the great Emperor of the Franks, Arthur is a mere creation of the imagination. On the contrary, in all probability the leading lines of the Arthur-legend proper, his fights with the Saxons, his betrayal by wife and nephew, and

death in battle have a foundation in fact, while the Charlemagne of legend is in many respects a wide departure from the Charlemagne of history. But the real charm and abiding fascination of the Arthurian story lies in the realm of fancy and not of fact—*realms*, perhaps we should rather say, for the student of Arthurian romance is free of more than one kingdom; the land of faëry whose horizon is lost in the mists of Celtic heathendom, and the brighter, but no less elusive, land where ideal chivalry has sworn a close alliance with Christian mysticism.

It is true that not all chronicled in the Charlemagne romances has its parallel in historic reality; myth has certainly played a part in the stories of the hero's birth and early trials, but in its main lines the character of these romances is determined by historic facts. Such heroes as Huon de Bordeaux and Girard de Viane may be creatures of imagination, but the struggles of the feudal nobles against their over-lord are facts of stern reality; Vivien may never have lived, and rashly vowed, and shed his blood heroically at the gates of Arles, but at least the varying fortunes of the contests between Christian and Saracen for the fertile lands of Southern France are as historical as the fights of our ancestors with Saxon and Dane; and if Ganelon never betrayed his king and country, yet Roland died at Roncevaux.

Again, the Charlemagne story has its supernatural element, but it is not that of wizardry and faëry as in the Arthurian story; there is no shape-shifting Merlin, no treacherous Morgain, or beneficent Lady of the Lake. Nor is it laden with wondrous hints and revelations of divine doctrines and mysteries as in the Grail romances. The supernatural machinery is celestial and strictly simple; a guardian angel watches by the emperor's pillow, and shields him from his foes; in answer to his prayer a hart shows his army the ford across the swollen stream; at his death St. James of Compostella is beheld in a vision casting into a balance, wherein the devil weighs the emperor's good and evil deeds, the churches and shrines Charlemagne has erected in his honour.

When, in the last stage of its development, the fairy element enters the Charlemagne cycle it is manifestly due to the influence of Arthurian romance; thus Huon of Bordeaux is aided by Oberon, the fairy king (who is, indeed, rather a Teutonic elf (*albe*) than a Celtic fairy), but Oberon is the son of Morgain, and the rightful heir to his kingdom, with whom Huon must come to terms, is Arthur. Ogier and Renouart alike live on in fairyland (though each is supposed to have ended his days as a monk!), but that fairyland is Avalon. The supernatural element proper to the legend is presented under

the simplest and most obvious form, that of direct Divine protection.

That the characterisation of the Charlemagne cycle should be more forcible than that of the Arthurian is only what we should expect; the authors of the *Chansons* were dealing with real men and women, like to, if not of, themselves. Charlemagne plays a far more important *rôle* than does Arthur. The British king is, after all, little more than a picturesque centre for a series of adventures in which he himself takes no part. He certainly leads his hosts to battle, but it must be admitted that the wars of the Arthurian story are its least interesting and most wearisome portion; otherwise, Arthur presides in a dignified manner at feasts, and invites adventures, which his knights achieve; as a personality he is not convincing.

And of his knights Gawain, with all his grace and courtesy, has about him that note of elusiveness that makes one realise that his proper destination is, like Arthur, the land of faëry. Lancelot is but a stage lover; Galahad a painted-window saint. Perceval and Tristan, as we meet them first, are indeed human, very creatures of flesh and blood, but the Arthurian story is not content to leave them so, the former it turns into a being scarcely less shadowy than Galahad, the latter into a lover as conventional as Lancelot.

But in the Charlemagne romances it is otherwise. The old Emperor, with his long white beard, is a majestic figure, which even the hint of years impossibly prolonged cannot rob of its reality. His intense family affections, his uncontrolled temper, violent fits of rage, savage revenge and unreasoning tyranny are all real. We feel the relationship between him and Roland to be no mere literary convention. The younger man, with his fierce temper, indomitable pride, and reckless courage, is exactly what we should expect Charlemagne's next of kin to be. Oliver, equally brave but less hot-headed, ready to temper his valour with discretion, is quite as real as his friend. Very real, too, that doughty champion of the church militant, Archbishop Turpin; and Ganelon, whose treason is in truth the attempt of a cowardly man to revenge himself upon one who has thrust him against his will into a post of danger.

> "Rollanz m'fors-fist en or et en aveir,
> Pur que jo quis sa mort et sun destreit;
> Mais traïsun nule n'en i otrei."

Convincing, too, is William of Orange; now battling valiantly against the overpowering force of his Saracen foes; now melting into tenderness over his dying nephew; and again wrathfully demanding aid from his pious and peace-loving

brother-in-law, King Louis—who wishes himself otherwhere. The impression left upon us is that if these heroes did not really live, they might well have done so. We are not surprised that in his journey through the other world Dante beheld a goodly group of souls of the Charlemagne heroes, while of the Arthurian he saw none, save Tristan. Apart from their literary interest, the Charlemagne cycle appeals rather to the student of History, the Arthurian cycle to the student of Folk-lore.

The literary development of the two cycles not only sets the above-noted differences in a vivid light, but illustrates their true nature, and enables us to realise the history reflected in the Charlemagne cycle. The great Emperor died in 814, and with him died, as we can see, the conception of a France forming an integral portion of a vast Germano-Roman Empire. The warriors who followed Clovis and Dagobert, the companions of Charles the Hammer and of Pepin the Little, had in the course of centuries been putting off their Germanhood, been differentiating themselves from their kinsmen across the Rhine. The popular songs commemorating the mighty feats of Merwing and Karling kings, songs of which monkish chroniclers have preserved us a few scraps in their barbarous verse, or of which they have partially rendered the substance in their dreary prose—these songs, originally German, gradually

passed into *Roman*, the language of the conquered race, as the Germanic element weakened. After Charlemagne's death his empire broke up, the *Roman* portion was cut definitely loose from the German-speaking world, and in less than a century the last traces of German speech vanished. The descendants of Frankish and Burgundian conquerors became French, and every fragment of German hero-song either put on a *Roman* dress or else died out. Small wonder if in the process the historic basis was shifted, if the deeds of earlier chiefs and warriors got transferred to the great Emperor. The fame and achievements of the latter would indeed have sufficed to inspire popular minstrels; but he also inherited the renown of many predecessors, and thus the earliest singers of his glory found themselves from the outset in possession of no inconsiderable stock of poetic material. The songs accumulated during the ninth century, and the decadence of the later Carolingians, threw into stronger relief the prowess and fame of Charlemagne.

As early, perhaps, as the first third of the tenth century, certainly by the middle of the century, *Chansons de Geste*, as distinguished from the popular songs on which they were based, had begun to appear, professing to narrate events of Charlemagne's lifetime. Throughout the tenth, eleventh, and early twelfth centuries these *Chan-*

*sons* were being enlarged, worked over, adapted to cyclic requirements. These two hundred years were fertile in strong characters, in fierce passions, in events and movements which transformed the old Franko-Roman Empire into modern France. The Carolingian polity decayed and passed away; the Capets, embodying the aspirations and ideals of a new nationality, rose to power, and founded a monarchy destined to last for eight hundred years, and to incarnate, far more than was the case in England, the national genius. The pangs and throes which accompanied the birth of modern France were fierce and prolonged; Norman and Saracen assailed from without; king and feudatory grappled in deadly struggle within. All this we find mirrored in the *Chanson de Geste.* Itself the record of a nation's formation, it exercised, we cannot doubt, a formative influence, the force of which it were hard to overestimate. Germanic in its pristine essence as it was, Germanic as it remained in many of its animating ideas, it is in its highest moments a magnificent record of French patriotic feeling, an ardent fosterer of devotion to the fair land apostrophised by Roland—

"Tere de France, mult estes dulz païs!"

From this, the creative period of the French epic, we possess comparatively little in an authentic and ungarbled form. Chief of what has come down to us is the earliest version of the *Chanson*

*de Roland,* and even this, there can be little doubt, represents a fairly advanced stage of development. The great bulk of Charlemagne romances belong to a period reaching from the early twelfth into the fourteenth century. The main outlines of the *Chanson de Geste* had been determined, its leading types of character and incident had been settled, it had acquired a prodigious stock of conventions, it still in a large measure reflected the religious and social ideas of the time; thus it could not escape the hands of the adapter, the rearranger, the hack writer who thought more of dressing up time-honoured stories according to the literary fashion of the moment than of preserving their original spirit and form. From the middle of the twelfth century it was exposed to the competition of the Arthurian stories—a competition against which, as we have seen, it largely defended itself by adopting the tone and style and temper of its rival.

How different was the fate of the Arthurian romance on French soil! It came into French hands with a stock of incidents and characters, above all with an æsthetic, and what, in default of a better term, must be styled an ethical character of its own, which persist despite the modifications imposed by the alien French genius. Its period of evolution is comparatively short; in from fifty to one hundred years it runs its full course; its

development is not determined by nor does it mirror the political situation or the political changes of the period. Vast and far-reaching social changes it does indeed herald and record, but indirectly and symbolically, not, as is the case with the *Chanson de Geste*, directly and realistically. The one body of literature is a monument of French intellect and French artistry exercising themselves upon an alien and imperfectly comprehended subject matter; the other is the nation typified, recording as it does its fierce birth-pangs, its wild and dour *enfances*, the exultant spirit of its early manhood.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the popularity, in mediæval times, of the Charlemagne cycle, or its importance as a factor in the history of European literature. In Italy it was the parent of a literature scarcely less extensive than that from which it sprang; indeed, the evolution was more complete. Italy yields pseudo-historical chronicles and metrical romances representing the legend at every stage: from that of historic reality, as typified by the rough-hewn figures of Roland and Oliver at the portal of Verona Cathedral, to that of pure fantasy, as in the *Orlando Amoroso* and *Orlando Furioso*. In Spain the Charlemagne story, as related in the *Chronica* of Alfonso X., gave impetus to the formation of a national cycle, the heroes of which—Bernardo del

Carpio, the children of Lara, and the Cid—should rival in popularity the heroes of the earlier *gestes*. In Scandinavia and in Germany the romances found translators and imitators, while in England we fail to realise that our *Sir Bevis of Hampton* is but an imitation of a French poem, and is reckoned by scholars as an offshoot of the cycle; while a nobleman and statesman like Lord Berners thought the translation of the tale of *Huon of Bordeaux* a task not unworthy of his time and labour. And have not we here in England the honour of possessing, in the MS. of the Bodleian Library, the oldest known copy of the most famous song of the cycle, the *Chanson de Roland?*

To undertake to give, in the small compass of one of these studies, an adequate account of so large and important a body of literature (M. Leon Gautier, in his *Épopées Françaises*, reckons *eighty* chansons as belonging to what he terms "la geste du roi" alone, without considering the subordinate cycle of the Narbonnais) would of course be impossible, the utmost that can be done is to describe the general character of the cycle, the lines into which it falls, and note the romances which will best repay the attention of the ordinary student of literature. Those who desire a more detailed account will do well to consult M. Leon Gautier's monumental work, *Les Épopées Françaises*, or the shorter but no less

scientific, and, it may be, better arranged *Histoire Poétique de Charlemagne*, by M. Gaston Paris.

The dividing line of the Charlemagne romances is less individual than in the case of the Arthurian cycle; there, it is comparatively easy to classify the romances according to the knight who is hero of the tale. The leading heroes of the Round Table form so many centres round which the romances respectively group themselves, and the collective mass of these smaller groups or subsidiary cycles make up the great Arthurian legend. But with Charlemagne and his peers this guiding principle will no longer serve us. There are certainly many romances borrowing their title from the hero of the adventures they relate, but none of Charlemagne's warriors save William of Orange, the Marquis *au court nez*, have anything like such a body of romance connected with them as have Gawain, Perceval, or Lancelot, or can fairly be described as hero of a "cycle." The Charlemagne romances deal rather with families than with individuals; they are *Chansons de Geste*,[1] lays dealing with the

[1] The translation of the word *Geste* is somewhat difficult; the meaning appears to have been originally chronicles = feats, then the feats or actions of a particular family = family or race. In this sense M. Gautier employs it, but I incline to think that the earlier meaning is the more correct; the concluding words of the *Chanson de Roland*, "Ci falt la Geste que Turoldus declinet," cannot possibly have the signification of *race* or *family*.

feats of a race rather than of a person. The tendency is to look upon qualities, not as the individual characteristics of *one* member of a family, but as the natural and inevitable inheritance of all. Valour and loyalty, cowardice and treachery, alike pass from father to son. Thus one group of poems deals with the heroic virtues of the descendants of Garin de Montglane, another with the treacherous race of Doon de Mayence.

But the more convenient method of classification, that followed by M. Gaston Paris, is to group the romances according to their subject matter as relating to the Emperor, for Charlemagne, as we have noted above, plays a far more important part in his cycle than does Arthur. Following these lines, we shall find one group of poems dealing with the personal history of the monarch, his birth, his youthful adventures, his domestic trials, his fabled journey to the East, and final coronation of his son as his successor. A second and more important group deals with his various wars, principally those with the Saxons and the Saracens,[1] and is connected with the subsidiary but highly interesting cycle of the Narbonnais, the heroic family of Aimeri de Narbonne, whose son, William of Orange, is the

[1] For romantic purposes the wars with the Lombards practically do not count, as the authors of the romances have largely confounded them with the Saracens. We shall refer to this again in connection with *Ogier le Danois*.

champion of Christianity against the Moslem invaders of the South of France. The third subdivision includes the romances which relate the internecine struggles of the great vassals with their over-lord, and counts among its number some of the most popular legends of the whole cycle.

While thus practically following historical lines, the compilers of the *chansons* have, however, by no means limited themselves to events occurring during the reign of the great Emperor, but freely transfer incidents from one period to another at their pleasure, ascribing to Charlemagne's reign what really happened under his predecessor, Charles Martel, or his successor, Charles le Chauve, and presenting the heroes of the *gestes* as living now under Charlemagne, now under his son Louis, thus involving the attainment of a truly patriarchal age. According to the author of the *Chanson de Roland*, Charlemagne was over two hundred years old at the date of Roncevaux, and, to rightly understand the historical background of the cycle, we must bear in mind that the conditions, social and political, there represented actually obtained for some three hundred years or so, and were by no means limited to the period covered by the reign of the son of Pepin. The anachronism exists, but it is not of such a nature as to destroy the value of the poetical representation.

In the romances dealing with the youth of

Charlemagne[1] we are on mythical rather than on historical ground. The story of his mother, *Berte aux grans piés*, is the familiar and oft-told tale of "The False Bride," the waiting-maid substituted for her mistress, and as such belongs to the domain of Folk-lore. Equally the tale of his youthful adventures, when he flies from the death by poison prepared for him by the sons of the false maid, and under the name of *Mainet* takes refuge with the King of Spain, frees him from his enemies, and marries his daughter, is a creation of fiction, and has no historical basis. The chronicle of Eginhard distinctly states that nothing definite concerning Charlemagne's youth was known, and the author therefore judged it inadvisable to write of it. But it seems doubtful whether the name by which the great Emperor is known did not take its rise in this popular fiction, and Charlemagne be not derived from *Charles Mainet*, the two names being often coupled together, rather than from *Carolus Magnus*. In any case it is to be regretted that so many English writers of the present day substitute the common-place translation Charles the Great, for the time-honoured and far more impressive Charlemagne.

These tales, and other scattered legends relating

1 I only refer in the text to the more important members of each subdivision ; they will be found fully enumerated in the bibliographical appendix.

to the personality of the great Emperor, are to be found in the vast compilation of the Venice Library, consisting of a number of the *Chansons* collected together under the name of *Charlemagne;* also in the Icelandic *Karlomagnus Saga*, which latter, however, begins the record of his adventures at a rather later date. A German poem, *Karl Meinet*, has preserved the account of his residence in Spain.

Purely fabulous, too, are the accounts of Charlemagne's journey to Jerusalem, accompanied by his twelve peers, and the extravagant feats they perform in fulfilment of their *gabs* or boasts; and of the false accusation of his Queen Blanchefleur, by the traitor Macaire—a version of which, under the title of *La reine Sibille*, enjoyed a widespread popularity.

The real interest of the legend lies not in Charlemagne's domestic life, but in his public actions; the energy with which he defended Christianity, and consolidated the Empire. This is, as we have said above, the historical element of the legend which, reflected in the romances, constitutes the distinctive feature and real importance of the cycle. The Emperor's object was obtained only at the cost of wars, foreign and domestic, and with such struggles the majority of the romances are concerned.

For poetical purposes the foes of the Emperor beyond his border were the Saxons and the

Saracens; both were alike enemies of God and of Holy Church, but the poems dealing with the latter are not only more numerous, but strike a stronger and a truer note. This may, of course, be largely owing to the fact that much of the struggle was fought out on the soil of France, and the reality of the contest was thus more forcibly brought home to the imagination of the writers. The gulf of nationality, too, was wider; there was less difference between the barbarous Saxon and semi-civilised Frank, both white races, than between the latter and the dusky hordes that swarmed from Africa through Spain into Southern France, even though these latter might be representatives of a civilisation older than that of the West. Wotan and Thor, barbarous as were their rites, never seem to have raised half as much horror and antagonism in the minds of mediæval Christians as did the fabulous gods of the Saracens, Mahmoud, Termagant, and Apollo! In mediæval romance the iconoclastic followers of Islam are represented as idolaters of a monstrous type, a quintessence of all the evils of paganism and heathenism, and they are provided with a motley pantheon borrowed from classic tradition, supplemented by the fertile imagination of romancers. Over and over again these heathen hordes are represented as besieging Rome, sometimes as having gained possession of the Imperial city, and holding in their power the most

precious relics of Christendom. More than once Charlemagne marches to the relief of *l'Apôtre*—as the Pope is generally termed in French romance—which relief is as a rule effected by a single combat between one of the Christian Paladins, and a giant more or less malicious, more or less willing to be converted, representing the Saracen host. It is the "motif" of David and Goliath repeated *ad nauseam*.

For such romances as *Aspremont*, *Les Enfances Ogier*, and *Fierabras*, there is no real foundation in history. The most that can be said is that they represent a distorted reminiscence of the siege of Rome by the Lombards.

But when we come to the group of poems dealing with Charlemagne's expedition to Spain, and culminating in the *Chanson de Roland*, we are on surer ground; history has indeed been modified under the influence of the Saracen nightmare, but we are dealing with modification, not with invention. Briefly related, the facts as chronicled by Eginhard and others are these:—In 778 two Moorish emirs from Spain presented themselves before the Emperor and declared their desire to become his vassals. Encouraged by this, Charlemagne marched with a large army into Spain, besieged and took Pampeluna, and laid siege in vain to Saragossa. (This part of the expedition is found, much embellished, in the following romances: *L'Entrée en*

*Espagne*, *La Prise de Pampelune*, and *Gui de Bourgogne*.) On the return of the army to France, the rear guard was surprised by the Gascons in the defile of Roncevaux, in the Pyrenees, and practically exterminated, Roland, prefect of the marches of Brittany, being among the slain. M. Leon Gautier remarks that this defeat must have been of far more importance than the chroniclers care to admit. Certain it is, that they pass over in but few words an event which has left an indelible impression on the popular mind, and the echoes of which can be caught at every subsequent period of French history. It is probable, too, that the Saracens lent a helping hand to the Gascon ambuscade. It is certain that tradition has forgotten the real authors of this shattering blow to the Emperor's prestige, and attributes it to the hereditary foe of Christianity, the Moslem.

But whatever be the true history of Roncevaux, the legend is the culminating point of the Charlemagne tradition. French scholars have vied with each other in praise of the *Chanson de Roland*, its dignity, its simplicity, and the lofty tone of courage, devotion, and patriotism which inspires it, and any unprejudiced critic must largely agree with them. It is not the work of a finished poet like Chrétien de Troyes, it has not the easy literary grace which marks the *lais* of Marie de France, but the force and directness of its language, and the

universality of the feelings to which it makes appeal, can never fail to awake a response. We sympathise alike with Roland in his desire to fight unaided the unequal combat; with Oliver in his calmer appreciation of the overwhelming odds against them, and his vain attempts to induce his headstrong friend to realise the truth; with Archbishop Turpin as he solemnly absolves the doomed army, and, having thus performed his duty as a Christian and cleric, gives valiant account of himself as man and warrior. All alike are inspired by one spirit, by the desire that none shall hereafter sing *male cançun* regarding their end.

Perhaps the most impressive and affecting part of the poem is the lament of Charlemagne over the dead body of his heroic nephew, when in pathetic words he paints the picture of his return to France, how he shall sit throned in the hall of Laon, and the representatives of the races subdued by Roland's aid shall come before him and ask tidings of the valiant captain of his host, and he must needs answer, "In Spain he lieth dead!" Then they, taking courage at the tidings, shall rebel against him, and who shall put them down? The poem might well have ended here, as indeed, in the earlier versions, it doubtless did. The defeat of the Saracen army, and the punishment meted out to Ganelon and his race, come somewhat as an anti-climax.

It may be worth while to ask here, what is the historic foundation for the heroic character of Roland? The chronicle of Eginhard, relating the catastrophe of Roncevaux, simply says: "Anselmus comes palatini, *et Hruodlandus Britannici limitis præfectus*, cum aliis compluribus interficiuntur."[1] Thus, here, Roland is simply prefect of the marches of Brittany, and no word is said of his relationship to the Emperor. It may seriously be doubted whether such a relationship did, in fact, exist. History records that Charlemagne had but one sister, who early became a nun, and thus could not possibly have been the mother of Roland. The relationship of uncle and nephew, as subsisting between the royal centre of an epic cycle and the hero of that cycle, is so general (*e.g.* the instances of Conchobar and Cuchulinn, Finn and Diarmid, Mark and Tristan, Arthur and Gawain), that it does not seem improbable that the Charlemagne legend may have been affected by the prevailing tradition. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that certain twelfth century texts represent Roland as not merely the *nephew*, but also the *son* of the Emperor, a feature manifestly borrowed from tradition, and highly primitive in character. Such is the relation between Sigmund and Sinfiotli in the Volsunga-

[1] Eginhard, *Vita Caroli IX.*, quoted by M. Gautier, *Épopées Françaises*, ii. p. 363.

saga, Arthur and Mordred (in the first instance it was probably Gawain), and, in some versions of the story, between Conchobar and Cuchulinn. Thus, while we may take it as settled that history determined the character and fate of Roland, it yet seems probable that his relationship to Charlemagne was due to the influence of mythic tradition.

The twelve peers, Roland's companions, who, according to the poem, shared his fate at Roncevaux, owed their origin, M. Gautier considers, to Germanic custom. Among primitive German tribes it was the rule for certain warriors to associate themselves closely with the chief of the clan, to share with him his dangers and his spoil. They were his *pairs*. Hence, M. Gautier[1] thinks the *douze pairs*, their number being an imitation of that of the Apostles. M. Gaston Paris is, however, inclined to consider the institution of later date. The names of the peers vary in different poems, and two of the most famous of Charlemagne's warriors—Naimes de Baviere and Turpin—do not appear to have belonged to this body. According to *Girard de Viane*, it was Naimes who persuaded the Emperor to institute the order, as a kind of superior tribunal of judgment (cf. *supra*). The extreme popularity of the peers is shown by the introduction of their title into English mediæval

[1] *Épopées Françaises*, vol. ii. p. 173.

romance, where we often find the word "*dosypere*" as equivalent for a valiant knight.

Compared with the *Chanson de Roland*, the poems dealing with the Saxon wars, *Guiteclin* and *La Chanson des Saisnes*, are far inferior in interest, marked by inordinate length and wearisome repetition of incident.

The third group of romances, those which relate the story of the Emperor's struggle with his rebellious vassals, is, taken as a whole, the most interesting of the three. Two among the number, *Renaud de Montauban* (*les quatre fils Aymon*) and *Huon de Bordeaux*, were in all probability the most popular and widely known of the Charlemagne romances, and have more or less retained that popularity to our own time.

Good mediæval translations of both are published by the Early English Text Society. The former gives a very fine picture of the relations between a vassal and his feudal lord, and the manner in which, among the nobler natures of the time, the obligations imposed by feudal service were realised and fulfilled. Charlemagne is entirely in the wrong in his treatment of the four brothers, but the old knight, Aymon, feels himself compelled by his oath of fealty to extend no aid or countenance of any kind to his sons. When in dire need they throw themselves upon the protection of their mother, who receives them with open arms, Aymon leaves

the castle at their disposal and goes forth; he will not break his vow by aiding them, nor will he forbid his wife to follow the instincts of natural affection. Renaud, the principal hero of the tale, has as keen a sense of honour as his father; when his clever and resourceful cousin Maugis, whose wiles have been the salvation of the brothers, casts the Emperor into a magic slumber, and thus conveys him into the castle he has been besieging, Renaud refuses to profit by what he deems a disloyal action, and sends Charlemagne again to his host in safety: a forbearance which, it must be owned, the Emperor's conduct does not justify! The four sons of Aymon and their gallant steed, Bayard, were deservedly popular; indeed, in folk tradition Bayard still roams the forests of Ardennes.

Here we may point out the gradual declension which the character of the Emperor, as represented in the romances, undergoes. In the *Chanson de Roland* he is a venerable but an imposing and dignified figure; in *Renaud de Montauban* and *Huon de Bordeaux* he is capricious, tyrannical, given to fits of senile rage, cruel and unjust in the highest degree; his barons openly flout him, and the authors do not hesitate to stigmatise him as *un vieil radoté*. How are we to account for so fundamental a change of conception? It seems clear that it was due to historic

causes, and was the outcome of a radical change in the relations between sovereign and subject. Under the feebler rule of the great Emperor's successors the power of the feudatory barons became increased to an alarming extent. The later romances, faithfully reproducing the characteristics of their age, have shifted the point of interest from the feeble and vacillating monarch to the rebellious but powerful vassal.

If the authors had maintained throughout the identity of the king during whose reign the romance was compiled, or remodelled, the picture would have been complete; but the position of Charlemagne as centre of the *Matière de France* was so firmly grounded, that they continued to retain him as representative of a system entirely alien to his methods. The relations between William of Orange and King Louis, in *Aliscans*, are quite possible, and a legitimate and artistic presentment of the situation as conceived under the reign of that king; postulated of Charlemagne they are incorrect and misleading. The character of the Emperor has really suffered from the continued popularity of his cycle, and the need of adjusting the romances to contemporary social conditions.

The romance of *Ogier le Danois*, consisting of no fewer than twelve branches, belongs, in so far as the older portion is concerned, to the earlier and

better period of the Charlemagne cycle, but it is somewhat marred by the barbarous fierceness and savagery of the hero.

Nevertheless, certain portions of the story have an epic force and vigour which raise them to the first rank of romantic legend. Such is the account of the prolonged siege of Chastelfort by the Emperor, a siege lasting for over seven years, during the progress of which all Ogier's men are slain; but the undaunted hero makes figures of wood, and clothing them in the armour of the dead knights, succeeds in deluding his foes into the belief that the castle is fully garrisoned. Also the charming story of the recognition of Ogier, after many years' imprisonment, by his faithful steed, *Broiefort*, which has been made the draught-horse of the neighbouring monastery, but retains sufficient spirit to carry its aged master to victory once more.

This story of a hero and his faithful steed was extremely popular in mediæval times, and we find it ascribed to Walter of Aquitaine (Waltharius) in the *Chronica Novalense*, an interesting monkish compilation of romantic legend; to Heimi, in the *Thidrek Saga;* and to William of Orange, in the *Moniage Guillaume;* in the two first cases the hero being a monk, and in the third a hermit—not a prisoner, as Ogier. The monastic version M. Gaston Paris holds to be the earliest form of

the story, of which the *Chronica* probably gives the oldest extant version, the *Thidrek Saga* being probably borrowed from a Lombard chronicle.

In the older parts of the Ogier romance we have an account of Charlemagne's war with the King of the Lombards, at whose court the hero seeks shelter. This is an historic feature, and of the more value in that, as we have noted above, the tendency of the later romances is to ignore the wars with the Lombards, and in the traditions relative to the siege of Rome to replace them by the Saracens.

The character of the hero appears to be more or less founded on fact; there was certainly at Charlemagne's court a valiant soldier of the name of *Oggerius*, or Otkar, but his nationality is doubtful. Certain chronicles speak of him as of the family of Pepin, in which case he would, of course, be a kinsman of the Emperor. The title *Danois* is by some modern scholars held to be a misreading of the original *Ardennois*, and Ogier is thought to have been of the Ardennes rather than of Denmark. In its final stages the tale shows distinct traces of Celtic influence; and this modern scholars have strongly felt. Mr. Nutt, in the study already referred to, remarks that Huon and Ogier are "Arthurian heroes who have strayed by accident to the court of Charlemagne;" and the late William Morris, in that fascinating collection of legendary

tales, *The Earthly Paradise*, gives the story of *Ogier the Dane* to a Breton sailor. Nevertheless, in its essential spirit the tale appears to be Germanic rather than Celtic.

According to the testimony of the chroniclers, Ogier was one of the most popular of mediæval heroes, but the numerous romances connected with his name have not retained their popularity as have *Renaud de Montauban* and *Huon de Bordeaux*. To-day most of us probably only know him through the medium of Hans Andersen's tales, though but few realise that the slumbering Danish hero Olge Danske is identical with the paladin of Charlemagne.

Both the romance of *Ogier le Danois* and that of *Renaud de Montauban*, if classified according to the family method suggested by M. Gautier, would belong to the *Geste* of *Doon de Mayence;* but the fact that that scholar himself was obliged also to include them in the *Geste du roi* seems an argument for the simpler method adopted by M. Gaston Paris, and followed in these pages.[1]

The tale of *Huon de Bordeaux* is less character-

[1] The romances belonging to the *Doon* family are found in a collected form in a MS. of the Montpellier Library. They are the following:—*Doon de Mayence, Gaufrey, Les Enfances Ogier, La Chevalerie Ogier, Aye de Avignon, Gui de Nanteuil, Parise la Duchesse, Maugis d'Aigremont, Vivien l'amachour de Monbranc, Renaud de Montauban.* Of these only the two mentioned above are of the first rank. *Parise la Duchesse* is a variant of the *Berte* and *Macaire* stories.

istic of any special age. The interest lies rather in the marvellous adventures of the hero, and the aid and protection extended to him by the fairy king Oberon. It is a tale of faëry not only in the loose but in the strict sense of the word, Huon's adventures reproducing closely those of the hero upon whom a task is laid which he can only accomplish by supernatural aid familiar to us in so many fairy tales, and as such it is one for all time. From it Shakespeare borrowed his fairy king, and Weber the libretto of his opera.

Among the romances of this class *Girard de Viane*, one of the oldest, is interesting as giving the account of the first meeting between Roland and Oliver; they fight themselves into friendship beneath the walls of Viane.

In most of these tales Charlemagne is represented as in extreme old age, in fact, as we have shown above, an unreasoning dotard, *un vieil radoté!* We therefore feel that the situation depicted in the *Couronnement Looys* is natural and inevitable; it may be considered as practically closing the cycle of Charlemagne and opening that of William of Orange, though there are, of course, poems dealing with the earlier history of that hero.

In the *Couronnement* we find the aged Emperor laying aside his crown in favour of his young son Louis, who, gentle and timid in disposition, shrinks from the responsibilities awaiting him. A

certain Hernaud, of the traitorous race of Ganelon, comes forward with an offer to rule the kingdom till Louis feels himself prepared to take up the reins of government, but *William Fierabras*, detecting the traitorous purpose concealed beneath the offer, fells the traitor to the ground, and announces that he will be the protector and champion of the young king, a task he loyally performs.

The historic personality underlying the epic figure of this William, the hero of the important cycle of the *Narbonnais*, is not clear. Investigation discloses even more forcibly than elsewhere in the cycle of how composite a texture it really is, and how it welds together in one picture, periods separated by the stretch of centuries, regions separated by the width of France. Monsieur Gaston Paris considers that the legendary hero represents a reminiscence of the feats of at least four historical Williams, *i.e.* William *Fierabras*, William *au court nez*, William of Toulouse, and William of Orange. Of these William *Fierabras* (who may, but this is doubtful, have borne the appellation *au court nez*) and William of Aquitaine, later of Orange, were contemporaries of the great Emperor, but the one belonged to northern, the other to southern France. William of Toulouse, undoubtedly an historical character, and one of whom we possess

a fair amount of authentic record, belonged to the tenth century. His was a striking personality, and he seems to have attracted stories belonging to the earlier William of Orange. Moreover, in the epic, William, when old, turns monk, and here would seem to have borrowed traits from two southern French saints, S. William *du Désert* and S. William *le Pieux*. Certain it is that the titles *Fierabras*, *au court nez*, and *d'Orange*, are all applied to one hero. But in those days *William* was the most common of Christian names. In a certain assemblage of nobles out of five hundred present three hundred and eighty were William; a fact which goes far to explain any confusion of identity which may have crept into the legend.

According to the romances, however, the parentage and personality of this William, though his surnames may vary, are distinct enough. He is the son of Aimeri de Narbonne, a descendant of that Garin de Montglane who, as we mentioned at the outset of our study, represents the heroic family or *geste* of the cycle. An extensive Italian compilation of the fourteenth century, under the title of *Storie Nerbonese*, recounts all the doings of the valiant family of Narbonne.

M. Gautier reckons twenty-four *chansons* composing this cycle, but here we need only enumerate those directly connected with the life and deeds of

the hero, *Les Enfances Guillaume*,[1] *Siège de Narbonne*, *Le Charroi de Nîmes*, *La prise d'Orange*. These trace the history of William from his earliest years to his establishing himself as lord of Orange, from which city he has driven out the Saracens, and married the wife of their king. The loves of William and Orable, who in the later poems is known by her baptismal name, Guibourc, occupy a great portion of the story.

At this point another hero appears upon the scene, Vivien, the nephew of William, whose valiant deeds and untimely death appear to have been intended as a parallel to Roland in the earlier story. The poems directly connected with this young hero are *Les Enfances Vivien*, *Le Covenant Vivien*, and the famous *Aliscans;* this last being the crown and centre of the "William" cycle, even as the *Chanson de Roland* is of that of Charlemagne. Both poems relate the defeat of the Christians by the Saracens, and in both the catastrophe is due to the rashness of the youthful hero.

In the *Covenant Vivien* we learn how the youth, on receiving knighthood, makes a solemn vow never to retreat before the Saracens, a vow which even

[1] Perhaps it may be well to explain that *Enfances* is a technical term applied to the account of the deeds of a hero before he receives knighthood. The tendency of later research is to prove that the "William" cycle was of greater importance than generally supposed.

his uncle William, no model of prudence, condemns as unduly rash. A large Saracen fleet appears on the river beyond the plains of Aliscans (Aliscans-Aliscamps = Elysian Fields, and is the name of the famous cemetery beyond the walls of Arles). Vivien urges on his young comrades to attack them, which the lads do with an wholly inadequate force, and are put to the worse. Under pressure Vivien allows one of his cousins to ride to his uncle William and demand aid, and the poem of *Aliscans* opens at the conclusion of the fatal struggle. William has seen all his men slain, his young nephews, his brother's sons, taken captive, and is compelled to fly from the field. But first he must know the fate of Vivien; he seeks him at imminent risk to himself, and at last finds the lad mortally wounded, and at the point of death, beside a spring. The scene that follows is exceptionally fine; the count at first yields to a natural outburst of grief at the death of one so young and valiant, but suddenly he recalls himself to a sense of his duty. No priest is at hand; Vivien is dying fast; it devolves upon William as nearest of kin to render the consolations of religion. The warrior becomes a priest; taking the dying boy in his arms he rests his head against his breast and bids him confess his sins. Vivien can think of nothing save that he has broken his vow, and retreated before the enemy. William pronounces

absolution; for the first time gives him *le pain béni*, and commends his soul to God.

> "Dex reçoif s'arme par ton digne commant
> Qu en ton sierviche est mors en Aliscans!"

This scene of the first communion and death of Vivien has been held by critics equal, if not superior, to that of the death of Roland.

The author of *Aliscans* is not a literary artist, he repeats himself, indulges in lengthy description, but the subject-matter with which he is dealing in the first half of the poem is exceptionally good, and he rises to the occasion. Very fine is the description of the arrival of William, a fugitive, and alone, disguised in the armour of a dead Saracen, at the gates of his own city of Orange. His wife does not know him in such guise; William would never have returned without the lads he went to succour; and not till the pursuers are close on his heels does Guibourc recognise and admit her husband. Then she shows herself the stronger of the two; it is she who comforts the Count, broken down by the disaster which has overtaken his house, and bids him hasten at once to demand succour from King Louis; she and her maidens dressed in armour, will delude the Saracens into the belief that Orange is fully garrisoned, and keep them at bay. William goes to the court of the king whom he has protected and aided, and who has wedded

his sister, only to be treated with scorn and contempt. This is one of the finest parts of the romance. Eventually Louis yields, in sheer terror of his truculent brother-in-law, and William is provided with a new army—and the poem with a new hero in the person of Renouart, the gigantic brother of William's wife, Guibourc, who, stolen from his people in early youth, is acting the part of scullion in Louis' kitchen.

The latter part of the poem is taken up with the recital of the valiant deeds of Renouart in the second battle of Aliscans, which results in a crushing defeat of the Saracens. Finally Renouart marries Aaliz, the king's daughter, and in the *Bataille de Loquifer* (a poem probably by the author of *Aliscans*, but much inferior to that work) is carried off to Avalon, where he combats the monster Chapalu in the presence of Arthur, King of Avalon.

The poem of *Aliscans* undoubtedly rests upon historical tradition; in the opinion of M. Leon Gautier, it represents the welding together of two widely separated events—the defeat of William of Aquitaine by the Saracens at Villedaigne in 793, and the defeat of the Saracens by William I., of Provence, in 976. The leading "motif" of the *geste* of the Narbonnais, the long-continued struggle between Christian and Moslem for the South of France, is genuinely historical.

The end of William's career is related in two romances, both bearing the same name, *Le Moniage Guillaume*, and generally referred to by scholars as *Moniage I.* and *Moniage II.*, in which we read how the hero eventually quitted the world and retired to the hermitage, where (after again issuing forth to combat the enemies of his country) he died in the odour of sanctity. A similar romance bears the name of Renouart, and relates how that hero also became a monk; but it is impossible to take any real interest in a figure so completely the creation of imagination. Renouart is never more than a serio-comic character, and distinctly out of place beside so strenuous a hero as William; nevertheless he appealed to the fancy of the Middle Ages, and was certainly a more living and persistent element in folk-tradition than the far more sympathetic Vivien.[1]

With the battle of Aliscans it seems fitting that we should close this brief sketch of the great French cycle. That the Charlemagne romances will ever offer to English students so tempting a field of inquiry as that of the Arthurian legend is doubtful. The subject-matter of this latter, consisting as it does largely of the mythical elements which lie at the root of all history and all belief, must

[1] The story of scullion turned hero seems to have been popular in mediæval times. There is a version of it in the Low German Thidrek Saga.

always make an appeal to a wider circle than that represented by professed students of history or literature. We have adopted Arthur as a national hero, and as such take a pride in his name and fame, but the interest of the Arthurian story lies deeper than our interest in Arthur the King, and the ideas he symbolises are not those which inspire the *Matière de France*. The Charlemagne legend, on the other hand, is of direct national interest; it appeals above all to the children and lovers of *La douce France*. Nor from a literary point of view is it of equal value. Probably the four best romances, in the opinion of literary scholars, would be reckoned to be the *Chanson de Roland*, *Renaud de Montauban*, *Huon de Bordeaux*, and *Aliscans*; but not one of these could bear comparison, as a piece of literature, with any one of the masterpieces of Arthurian romance. I have suggested above that it may be owing, in a great measure, to this deficiency in literary form, and consequent failure to satisfy the more exacting literary taste of the twelfth century, that the Charlemagne cycle was superseded so completely in popular favour by the Arthurian romances. If, however, we distinguish content from manner, the *Matière de France*, as an epic cycle, ranks above the Arthurian, which is not strictly epic; regarded in this light, the *Chanson de Roland* has few rivals. And were it only as a picture of

the impression produced by a great man upon the minds and imaginations of the people of his day, an unrivalled collection of documents showing how fancy deals with facts, and history becomes folk-tale, the *Matière de France* would be well worth our study; our fathers found pleasure in these old stories, and we shall not do ill if we follow their example.

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*[I am indebted to Mr. Nutt for revising and bringing the Bibliography up to date.]*

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In the list which follows the dates in brackets are those of the recension which has come down to us, as fixed by M. Léon Gautier in his *Épopées Françaises*.

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## ADDENDUM ET CORRIGENDUM.

*Page* 51, *at end of fourth paragraph add :*

> "There is also a long article in Welsh on the *Mabinogion* to be found in the Second Edition of the *Gwyddionadur*, from Prof. Anwyl's pen. Some of the views therein expressed have since been modified by the writer, but the article is of great value to the Welsh reader."

*Page* 53, *line* 12, *omit* German.

# THE FOUR BRANCHES OF THE MABINOGI

"THE very first thing that strikes one, in reading the Mabinogion, is how evidently the mediæval story-teller is pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret: he is like a peasant building his hut on the site of Halicarnassus or Ephesus; he builds, but what he builds is full of materials of which he knows not the history, or knows by a glimmering tradition merely: stones 'not of this building,' but of an older architecture, greater, cunninger, more majestical. In the mediæval stories of no Latin or Teutonic people does this strike one as in those of the Welsh."

These words of Matthew Arnold express with marvellous insight the impression left upon the reader by the mediæval Welsh tales of which the origin and nature are discussed in the present study, and define with accuracy their interest and import for the student. The lover of literature will always turn to them for their intrinsic beauty; for the

student they have the further charm of mystery, of possible survival from a past of which well-nigh all other remains have perished.

In the year 1849 Lady Charlotte Guest published the text and translation of a number of Welsh romances, all drawn from the fourteenth-century manuscript known as the Red Book of Hergest, save the romance of Taliessin, of which the only known MS. dates back to the seventeenth century. Four of these tales, entitled respectively Pwyll Prince of Dyfed, Branwen daughter of Llyr, Manawyddan son of Llyr and Math son of Mathonwy, form a series. At the head of the tale of Pwyll we find the words: *Llyma dechreu Mabinogi*, "Here is the beginning of the Mabinogi," and Branwen, Manawyddan, and Math are called respectively the second, third, and fourth branches of the Mabinogi. From the singular *Mabinogi* was formed a plural *Mabinogion*, which was used by Lady Guest to designate the entire collection published by her. But strictly speaking the term *Mabinogion*—or, to be quite precise, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*—only applies to the four tales cited above, and it is with these four that the present study is alone concerned.

The most casual reader of Lady Guest's collection cannot fail to notice that the Mabinogion proper (we retain the convenient term) differ greatly in important respects from the other

romances published by her. A word must be said about these. Two of them, *The Dream of Maxen Wledig* and the "*Contention*" (?) *of Lludd and Llevelys* have obvious affinity with the legendary history worked up by Geoffrey of Monmouth; *Kulhwch and Olwen*, *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, *The Lady of the Fountain*, *Geraint* (Tennyson's *Enid*), *Peredur*, introduce Arthur and other personages of the Arthurian cycle, but a distinction must be made: the first two have no affinity with any of the Arthurian romances handed down to us in French or German, whereas the last three have a close connection (the exact nature of which is a matter of dispute) with the Arthurian romances of the greatest twelfth-century French poet, Chrétien de Troyes, known respectively as *Yvain*, *Erec*, and *Le Conte du Graal*. Finally, the story of *Taliessin* has features and traits markedly akin to those of the Mabinogion proper, although it is formally connected through the personage of its hero with the Arthur cycle.

The earliest writers who brought this literature to the knowledge of the now Welsh world assumed that *Mabinogi* meant a youth, and that, as Stephens says in his Literature of the Cymry, the tales were "written to while away the time of young chieftains," that they were nothing but a collection of mediæval Welsh nursery or fairy tales. In reality, as Prof. Rhys has shown, the term *Mabinog*

belongs to the Welsh bardic system, and denotes a kind of literary apprentice, a scholar receiving instruction from a qualified bard. *Mabinogi* meant the subject matter of a *Mabinog's* course, the literary stock-in-trade which he had to acquire. This correct appreciation of the force of the term not only enables us to perceive that the Mabinogion must, at the outset at least, have had another object beyond recreation; it also enables us to equate the Welsh collection with another famous mediæval work, the *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*. Snorri systematised and summarised the northern mythology in narrative form with the express object of aiding the Skald or Icelandic poet to master one of the main elements of his craft. Again, just as the Skalds used this mythology as a source of what they deemed poetic ornament, introducing allusions, periphrases, variations upon a mythic theme, the merit of which seems to have been measured by their obscure, artificial and contorted character, so Welsh bards in a number of poems which have come down to us make allusions to the personages and incidents of the Mabinogion, allusions of so wilfully obscure a character that if we had not the tales themselves we should be entirely at a loss to know what the bards were driving at. The fairy-tale, nursery-tale character of the Edda, as of the Mabinogion, is due to both bodies of literature belonging to the same early

mythic stratum of belief and fancy as the nursery tale; but whereas the latter is now deliberately restricted to that class of readers, children, who, psychologically, still belong in part to that early stratum, the former were intended to be and were taken seriously by grown-up men.

The foregoing remarks will show the lines upon which we propose to discuss the Mabinogion. They will be regarded as remains of a literature fashioned by a special literary caste, the bards, one of whose definite duties it was to preserve the mythic and heroic traditions of the race.

On seeking to date the tales we find that orthographical peculiarities in the manuscript point to an archetype or archetypes not later than the end of the twelfth century, and the tenth-eleventh century is the date generally adopted by scholars for the fixing of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi in the form in which we are acquainted with them. The chief reason for this opinion is as follows: After the Norman conquest of England the Arthur legend acquired immense popularity, and in the second half of the twelfth century over-ran the literature of all Europe; Wales shared in this movement, and most of the special Welsh Arthurian literature shows affinities with the continental forms. Now the tales with which we are dealing know absolutely nothing of this later Arthur story, and must have been

composed before it attained the important position it holds in Welsh literature of the twelfth century.

This date, however, is only of importance in helping us to fix a *terminus ad quem*, for while some tales contain elements which may date from the eleventh century, others go back to the beginning not of recorded history, but of the history of the Aryan race.

The Four Branches of the Mabinogi take the form of prose narratives forming a more or less coherent whole, and are concerned with persons who, generally speaking, are treated as human beings, but who, at the same time, are credited with supernatural powers. In this lies their resemblance to folk- and nursery-tales: this is the peculiarity which has made many speak of the "*naïveté*" of these tales. If by "*naïveté*" is meant the fact that the supernatural is treated as the most natural thing in the world, and that the turning-points of the tales are magical quite as a matter of course, then they *are* "*naïve*": otherwise these productions of a complex bardic system can lay no more claim to "*naïveté*" than the rhapsodies known as the poems of Taliessin.

We have then to ask what is the source of this supernatural element? The characters are treated as human beings, and are often identified with historical or quasi-historical personages. If we accept the tales as originally told of human beings,

we must suppose that the supernatural elements were added entirely from the imagination of the writers of the tales. The other alternative is to take the personages of the tales for supernatural beings who came to be treated by the legend-mongers as human beings, but who, at the same time, retained their superhuman powers, upon which the incidents, and thus the very existence, of the tales depended.

In other words, we seek to know whether we are dealing with primitive mythology or with deliberate fiction. Analogy at once points out that we are dealing with the very lowest stratum of human thought, with primitive mythology, and the supernatural element in the Mabinogi is only to be understood if we regard it as a manifestation of this mythology.

The process which has taken place in the transmission of the Mabinogi down the ages has been one in which tales originally concerning gods (how these tales were formed at the outset does not now immediately concern us) became shorn of the idea that they really did concern gods, and were told as if of human beings possessing supernatural attributes. In fine, the Four Branches of the Mabinogi are nothing more nor less than degraded and adulterated mythological tales.

The fact that the Mabinogi formed the literary equipment of the apprentice bard implies the

existence and importance of story-telling in bardic circles; and there certainly existed an enormous number of stories, legends, and tales, of which the Four Branches of the Mabinogi—chosen for some reason unknown to us (or, indeed, the choice may have been perfectly arbitrary) as the ones to be repeated by the apprentice of some school of bards —can only have formed a very small part. We have overwhelming proof of this. Firstly, in the Four Branches themselves; secondly, in other mediæval Welsh tales; thirdly, in the early Welsh poetry, chiefly that of the so-called Book of Taliessin; fourthly, in what we may call the "catalogue-poem" of the Graves of the Warriors; and fifthly, in the mediæval prose literature known as the Triads.

It would take too long to enumerate all the plain indications of the existence of other similar tales which are to be found in the Four Branches. This line of research has been exhaustively followed up by Professor Anwyl in his articles in the *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie.*

The early Welsh poetry—that, for instance, collected by Skene in the "Four Ancient Books of Wales"—contains numerous allusions to characters mentioned in the Four Branches. These characters are referred to along with others in such a manner as to warrant us in believing that they are all of the same type. There are also allusions to

incidents in the Four Branches along with allusions to incidents the nature of which is unknown, but which must be similar. All these references are of such a nature—being, as already noted, utterly unintelligible but for our knowledge of the tales—as to preclude any idea of the tales being subsequent to the poems. They are, therefore, either references to the tales as we now actually have them, or to their prototypes. Little has been done in the way of satisfactorily dating these poems, but of those that have been dated by M. Loth (see note), several contain references of the above-mentioned type. These poems range in date from the ninth to the twelfth century, and so, if we accept M. Loth's dating, we may postulate the existence of a mass of legends of the type of the Four Branches at least as early as the ninth century.

Taking next the case of the Triads and the Verses of the Graves, we find that many of the Triads and the whole collection of Verses may be looked upon from one point of view as mere catalogues of tales; for, unless, in the case of the Verses, each of the warriors mentioned was of note, or, in other words, had some tale told of his prowess, his memory would not have been thus preserved. The same is true of the Triads. In the case of heroes, places and events mentioned, there must have existed a tale which justified that mention.

In other Welsh mediæval tales we have similar

evidence of a huge wealth of Welsh stories. "Kulhwch and Olwen," for instance, which is an attempt to rejuvenate old material, coupled with a desire on the writer's part to air his own compendious knowledge of Welsh legend, contains enormous catalogues of personages, with their attributes, whom it would have been folly to name, were there not some object, in the way of recalling their story, in thus naming them.

In short, the evidence is overwhelming for the existence of a huge mass of legend of this type in Wales, and so we come back in another way to the point from which we started—namely, the fact that the Four Branches as they stand are a selection or a compilation of certain of these stories.

We have called these tales degraded from a mythological point of view. In fact, so far have they lost their original characteristics under the influence of oral tradition proceeding through long years amongst a people becoming more civilised, and under the influence of Christianity, that, if the Four Branches of the Mabinogi stood alone, it would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at the original meaning of the legends. The fact already mentioned, of the crediting of personages otherwise human with superhuman attributes would be almost the only clue to the mythological "stratum" in the tales.

But, as we have said, the Four Branches do not stand quite alone; even in Welsh literature we have analogues and aids. Firstly, in the other mediæval tales we find, scattered up and down, a little help, for they too contain some of the original mythological *données*. We have also the early poems, but in this case, unfortunately, the help we get is far less than we have a reason to expect, owing to their obscure nature. We have again the Bruts (Chronicles), which aid us chiefly in picking out the historical and quasi-historical adulterations. We have also the mass of legendary literature dating from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries known as the Triads, and, finally, we have the legend of Taliessin, which, although late in the form in which we now have it (sixteenth-seventeenth century), is of equally early origin with the Four Branches, and is their closest analogue in Welsh literature. Going further afield, the abundant early Irish literature furnishes the greatest amount of help, and it is chiefly by comparison with it that the riddle of the Mabinogi may be read. Its greater extent renders the work of mythological identification easier; the Welsh characters corresponding to the Irish are thus also recognised as mythological.

Comparison with Irish literature reveals striking similarities between many Irish and Welsh tales,

similarities which may be divided into two groups. Firstly, there are resemblances between the fundamental *données* of the tales, indicating as they do still closer resemblances between Welsh and Irish cycles of tales in their earlier stages. The Mabinogi have evidently been pieced together very like a mosaic, and it is palpably evident that, in the form in which we now have them, they are only a collection of more or less cleverly-joined fragments of earlier tales. Where, therefore, we find that many of these fragments exhibit a close connection with Irish legend, we are justified in supposing that the earlier forms of the Welsh tales bore a very great resemblance to those of Ireland. This is best seen on equating the characters. The children of Dôn, whom we meet in the story of Math, are undoubtedly equivalent to the Tuatha de Danann (the tribes of the Goddess Danu). These Irish beings are Irish gods, and the children of Dôn are possessed of such magic attributes as stamp them as gods of Welsh legend. Govannon, son of Dôn, the Welsh smith, can be none other than the smith Goibniu (genitive Goibnenn, the form nearest to the Welsh), of the Tuatha. Manawyddan mab Llyr is evidently the Manannan mac Lir of Ireland, the lord of the Otherworld, though not recognisable as such in the Mabinogi.

Owing to the degraded nature of the Welsh tales, and to their composite mosaic character,

the relative importance of the personages has been disturbed, and we ought to be quite prepared to find that personages playing very shadowy parts in the tales are really of great importance from the original point of view. This is true, for instance, of a character called Beli. He plays no distinct part in the Four Branches. He is but mentioned. He seems to be the husband of Dôn, though this does not appear from the tales, and he is probably to be equated with the Irish Bile, the father of Mile, the eponymous hero of the Milesians. Bile's realm was Spain, which, in the strongly euhemerised mediæval texts where alone this section of Irish mythic history is preserved to us, corresponds with the Otherworld or Hades.

Secondly, we have similarities between names and incidents in the tales which are not fundamental, but a great deal more superficial: cases where, undoubtedly, the Welsh have been borrowing from the Irish; in other words, we have cases of direct influence of the Irish upon the Welsh story-tellers. In Branwen, for instance, the Llinon is evidently the Shannon, while in other tales of the Mabinogion we have forms like Esgeir Oervel for Sescenn Uairbheoil, Garselit for Gearr-Selut, whilst in Kulhwch and Olwen we have Cnychwr mab Ness for Conchobar mac Nessa.

How are these resemblances to be accounted for?

Two differing theories have been suggested. It is known that at the beginning of recorded history there existed a large number of Goidels (Irish Celts, though an incorrect expression for that period, explains whom we mean by Goidels) in West Wales, and the differences in the two theories depend upon the different manner of accounting for the presence of these Goidels.

One theory believes that the Goidels formed the first wave of Celtic immigration or conquest from the Continent. They were followed by the Brythons, that branch of the Celts to which the Gauls and Welsh belong, who drove their predecessors westward until, when recorded history begins, very few of the first Goidelic inhabitants survived in West Wales. The conquest of the Western part of North Wales by the North British Cunedda and his sons in the fourth century of our era, the first historical fact that emerges from the gloom and uncertainty of early tradition, would then appear to be the final crushing out of Goidelic resistance, after which the remaining Goidels would live peaceably with their conquerors and gradually amalgamate with them, adopting their language. The resemblance of Welsh to Irish legend is accounted for by those who hold this theory on the supposition that these Goidels transmitted their tales to the Welsh, and that the latter, developing them along their own lines, differen-

tiated them somewhat from their originals. This is, in outline, the theory held by Professor Rhys.

Professor Kuno Meyer, on the other hand, holds that there is no jot of evidence, historical, philological, or traditional, to justify the idea that a Goidel ever set foot in Britain except as a conqueror from Ireland. The Goidels found in Wales he treats as piratical invaders from Ireland in the second-fifth centuries. Relying upon the evidence of names, he says that the Irish tales were borrowed by the Welsh not earlier than the ninth century, and that they were handed over by oral tradition.

On reviewing these two theories we find that the first accounts in a fascinating manner, analogous to that of other conquests from the Continent, for the coming of the Goidels and Brythons. The second theory does not touch this point.

Professor Meyer is able to bring forward much tangible evidence in support of his theory, while that of Professor Rhys rests more upon conjecture.

Glancing back at our division of the similarities to be found in the tales we find that Professor Meyer's theory deals only with the second group, that of the more superficial resemblances. In the tale of the heated house in Branwen, which Professor Meyer equates with the Irish *Mesce Ulad*, we have an evident and natural interpolation. Professor Meyer's theory does not really explain

the vast amount of correspondence between the fundamental *données* of the tales which form our first class of similarities.

An argument against the late borrowing of Irish legend by Welsh bards, which has hitherto been entirely overlooked may be drawn from an examination of the relations of the borrowed incidents to the whole mass of Irish literature. Let us assume that the Welshmen did borrow in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries: surely they would have borrowed those legends which were most popular with the Irish story-tellers. In that case we should find numerous adaptations of the great Ulster heroic cycle, whereas, save for a passing notice of Conchobar in Kulhwch, and one poem known as "*Marwnad Conroi mab Dairi*," having for its theme the enmity between Cuchulainn and Curoi, Welsh literature ignores the Ulster cycle entirely. On the other hand it presents a mass of analogues with the mythological cycle, that in which the Tuatha de Danann are the protagonists. Now, from the tenth century on, at least, the Irish had begun to euhemerise this cycle, and to present its characters as pre-Christian kings and warriors. Only one long example of a romantic treatment of the mythological cycle has survived in Irish, although a considerable number of story-skeletons have been preserved owing to their inclusion in biographical and topographical

works compiled by Irish antiquaries of the tenth and eleventh centuries. On the other hand we possess some fifty to sixty tales of the heroic cycle dating, in their present form, from this very period. These facts seem effectually to negative the proposition that Welsh mythic romance borrowed its substance and subject-matter from Ireland in the tenth-eleventh centuries. That style, mode of narration, colouring, and subsidiary incident may have been affected is quite another matter.

Both theories agree in believing that since there was a Goidelic population in Wales, since the Mabinogi appear to belong to the Goidelic regions of Wales, and since there is a great similarity between the Welsh and Irish tales, therefore the Mabinogi must be Goidelic in origin. Approaching the question from the more purely Welsh side we find ourselves met by many difficulties in the way of accepting this view. The tales are avowedly mythological: why should the Goidels only have had a mythology? Or, if the Brythons are allowed to have had a mythology at all, why should the Goidelic mythology alone have survived? Again, are we to suppose that the whole jealous bardic system of Wales existed for the sole purpose of retailing exotic Irish legends? We have already proved that a vast amount of legend similar to that of the Four Branches existed at one time. Was that, too, Goidelic in origin? If not,

why should only a Goidelic literature have survived?

Is it possible then to formulate a theory that will offer fewer difficulties?

It is plain that Goidels and Brythons are closely-related branches of the Celtic stock; and of course the Celtic stock is itself but a branch of the Indo-European or Aryan family. Comparative Mythology and Folk-lore Study have demonstrated community of myth and legend between the most widely separated branches of the Aryan family, and this community is best explained by postulating the existence of primary Aryan myth-roots which the different branches of the Aryan race differentiated along their own lines. Applying this to the Celtic stock we find that the scission between Goidel and Brython is comparatively late in history and comparatively small when compared with those scissions that lie between the main branches of the Aryan family. There ought therefore to be no difficulty in supposing that the deeper community of legend, that indicated by our first class of similarities, depends upon the existence of an early Celtic mythology which Goidel and Brython shared in common.

The more superficial resemblances which we placed in our second group may possibly be but late borrowings, as Professor Meyer has argued with great force. Considering the close relation of

Goidel to Brython it would be surprising if they had not borrowed from one another at all.

We shall therefore treat the Four Branches of the Mabinogi as the degraded Brythonic development of early Celtic myth-roots, owing their deeper resemblances to Irish tales to original community of myth, and their more superficial resemblances to late influence from Irish sources.

The form of these tales is, as we have already stated, that of prose narrative. In three places do we find verses embedded in the prose. These verses, however, are not like the verses found in Irish prose tales, either a kind of lyric outburst or a recapitulation of the incidents told in prose, but are more of the runic or riddling nature of the fragments of doggerel to be found in certain nursery tales. Skene's idea that the tales are founded upon the poems of "Taliessin," &c., in the same way as the great French prose romances of the thirteenth-fifteenth century are prose redactions of the poems of Chrétien de Troyes and his imitators, is absurd, for the poems contain references only, often most obscure, to already existing tales, and in themselves make not the slightest attempt to tell any connected story.

Nor have we any reason for believing that the tales are founded upon poems which are now lost to us, for there is not a particle of evidence with which to oppose Professor Zimmer's conclusion that

the Celts threw their narratives into prose while the Teutons preferred to cast theirs in poetic form.

We shall now approach the tales more closely, pointing out the features of note as we go along.

## PWYLL, PRINCE OF DYFED

Pwyll, prince of Dyfed, goes a-hunting in Glyn Cuch. Separated from his men, he meets a pack of wondrous hounds following a stag, which they pull down before him in a little clearing in the wood. After admiring for a while the beauty of the dogs, whose coats are a shining white, and whose ears are a brilliant red, he drives them off, and calls on his own pack to the quarry. A grey rider on a grey steed rides up and rebukes Pwyll for this discourteous deed. Pwyll offers to make amends, and the offer is at once accepted. Pwyll and the grey stranger, who is Arawn, King of Annwn (Hades), are to exchange appearances, kingdoms, and duties. Pwyll is to fight a duel with Hafgan, the enemy of Arawn, a rival king in Annwn. Pwyll will overcome his opponent at the first onset, and he is on no account to strike Hafgan a second blow, for a second blow has the power of reviving the vanquished king, instead of putting an end to him. In a year's time Pwyll and Arawn are to meet again in Glyn Cuch to exchange shapes once more, and they separate to carry out the bargain.

Pwyll is taken for Arawn at the latter's court, sleeps innocently with Arawn's queen, and on the appointed day mortally wounds Hafgan, unites Annwn under his own headship, and returns to the trysting-place to meet Arawn. They take once more their own proper shapes, and return to their own courts. Arawn at once dis-

covers from his wife how true a friend he had in Pwyll, while Pwyll finds that Dyfed had never been so well ruled as during his year of absence. The two kings thereupon exchange valuable presents to re-affirm their friendship; and Pwyll, because he governed so well in Annwn, and because he united Annwn under one headship in one day, is ever afterwards known as Pwyll Pen Annwn (Pwyll, Head of Hades), laying aside his former title of Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed.

Although in its relationship to the other parts of the tale of Pwyll, this first part appears suspiciously like an explanation, ætiological or sophisticated in nature, of the origin of the appellation Head of Hades, there is no mistaking the mythological element to be found therein. The grey rider on a grey horse is avowedly a King in Hades, one of the darker powers, the possessor of the famous Cwn Annwn (the Dogs of Hades), whose memory has hardly yet died out of the folk-lore of remoter Wales. His friendship with Pwyll prepares the way for his friendship with the apparent culture-hero of South Wales, Pryderi, the son of Pwyll; a friendship which is implied in the tale of Math mab Mathonwy.

It seems as if the explanation why Pwyll was called Pen Annwn is weak and insufficient, and when we ask why such an explanation was rendered necessary at all we are driven to the conclusion that there must have been two Pwylls—one a historical or quasi-historical Prince of Dyfed, and

the other a Pwyll who had always been considered as Pen Annwn, *i.e.*, a mythological character who had always been King of Hades. The writer of our story had evidently identified and confused the two characters.

As an instance of the degradation of the tale from a mythological point of view we may notice that Annwn, the Celtic Otherworld, which in the Irish tales is generally treated as across the sea or within a hill, is here looked upon as a mundane region—an ordinary province seemingly bordering upon Dyfed.

In the next part of the story, Pwyll, during a great feast at Arberth (the modern Narberth), walks out and seats himself upon a mound called Gorsedd Arberth, This mound has a magic "privilege": every one of high birth seating himself upon it is either soundly beaten or sees a marvel. A strange lady riding slowly towards them upon a white steed appears to Pwyll and his companions. He sends one of his men to meet her but she passes by, and cannot be overtaken on foot. She is pursued on horseback, but, without any apparent hastening, she defies pursuit. Next day she appears to them again at the same time and place, and a squire mounted on the fastest horse procurable follows her in vain. On the third day Pwyll himself gives chase, and on his praying her to stop, she graciously does so, Pwyll is fascinated by her beauty, while she, on her part admits that she has come to seek him for a husband. She is Rhiannon, the daughter of Heveidd Hên, and is sought in marriage by an unwelcome suitor, Gwawl fab Clud. She gives Pwyll a rendezvous a year

hence at her father's court, where the marriage feast will be prepared.

At the appointed time the feast is about to commence when a stranger appears and asks a boon. Pwyll promises to grant it, and the stranger (who is none other than Gwawl fab Clud) demands Rhiannon and the feast. Rhiannon, however, claims the feast for the retainers, and, telling Pwyll to grant the boon, shows him how to get the better of the unwelcome visitor. Rhiannon is to be given to Gwawl in a year's time, but on the day of the marriage Pwyll is to conceal a body of his men near the festal hall, and disguising himself in rags, is to enter and ask a boon of Gwawl. This boon is to be the filling of a magic bag, the gift of Rhiannon herself, with provisions; and this bag, no matter how much he put into it, will never get any fuller. On being questioned, Pwyll is to say that it will not be properly filled until a noble step in and press down its contents with his feet, saying, "Enough has been put in." Pwyll is to fasten the bag around Gwawl, whom Rhiannon engages to make enter the bag, and calling in his ambushed men is to dictate his own terms. Gwawl is satisfied with Pwyll's apparent compliance, and departs to his own country. Pwyll also returns to Dyfed.

At the end of the year the marriage feast is prepared for Gwawl. Rhiannon's cunning scheme works out perfectly: Gwawl is caught in the bag and beaten by Pwyll's men, and finally allowed to go on promising to seek no vengeance in the future. Pwyll and his bride return to Arberth with the blessing of Heveidd Hên, and they rule prosperously for two years.

This forms the second section of the tale, and we have here the legend which tells of the meeting

of Pwyll with his wife Rhiannon. Seated on a wondrous mount Pwyll is sought by a supernatural bride. This looks exceedingly like the wooing of a mortal by a fairy bride; for we notice that in this part of the tale Pwyll is treated as a mere mortal credited with no supernatural powers or privileges, while the magic powers of Rhiannon show up in sharp contrast.

Rhiannon is a difficult character to identify mythologically. Professor Rhys was at first inclined to regard her as an embodiment of the dawn or dusk, but later connected her with the moon. She is the daughter of Heveidd Hên, and the appellation Hên, the Ancient, generally seems to refer in these stories to a dim mythological character appreciated as such to a certain extent by a writer who is evidently looking back upon the old order of things.

Since Gwawl fab Clud is an enemy of Pwyll's, and since Pwyll is one of the darker powers, Gwawl should be classed among the solar heroes. This section of the tale may therefore be interpreted as a representation of the struggle between the powers of light and darkness for the possession of the moon-bride.

At the end of two years Pwyll is still without an heir, and the nobles of the country utter their discontent, and ask Pwyll to take another wife. He demands, and is granted, a year's delay, and before the end of that

time a son is born, who is, however, spirited away while the six women watchers are asleep. They discover the loss before Rhiannon awakes, and killing a puppy, they lay its bones near her, and swear to the unhappy mother that she herself has slain her child. The rumour spreads, and Pwyll is asked to separate from his wife. This he indignantly refuses to do, and Rhiannon, as penance, has to sit at the outer gate of the court, tell her story to every comer, and offer to carry him into the court. Seldom does any one consent to be carried.

At this time Teyrnon Twrf Vliant, "the best man in the world," is lord of Gwent-is-Coed. Every night of the Calends of May a beautiful mare of his gives birth to a foal which immediately disappears. At the time of our story Teyrnon resolves to watch at the fateful hour, fully armed. A frightful noise is heard; a great claw is thrust in through the window and seizes the new-born foal. Teyrnon cuts the claw through at the joint, and rushes out; in the darkness there is nothing to be seen, and he only hears a terrible noise. Returning, he finds at the door a man-child wrapped in a fair mantle. He takes the child to his wife, and they rear him up under the name of Gwri Gwallt Euryn (Gwri of the Golden Hair). He grows apace—wondrously for his age—and at four years wants to drive the horses to water. He is given the horse born the night he was found.

Teyrnon and his wife now hear of the doings and happenings at the court of Pwyll; Teyrnon recognises in Gwri the lineaments of Pwyll, and, out of pity for Rhiannon, the couple agree to send Gwri to the court. Next day Teyrnon sets forth with his foster-son to the court, and, after seeing Rhiannon doing her penance, and of course refusing to be carried, both are heartily welcomed at the court. Teyrnon makes known his object, and the child is at once recognised as the

offspring of Pwyll. Pendaran Dyfed, to whom the child is afterwards given to rear, renames him Pryderi (Anxiety), from the first words uttered by Rhiannon on learning the truth. Teyrnon and his wife are promised great recompense, and the tale comes to a rapid close with a mention of the death of Pwyll, the consequent accession of Pryderi to the headship of Dyfed, and his marriage to Kicva.

It is only in this section that we come to the real kernel of the tale of Pwyll, namely the birth of Pryderi. Working backwards we can now surmise how the tale was put together. Firstly, we have the birth of Pryderi: then naturally follows the account of the meeting of his parents, and thirdly we have the explanation of his father's strange sobriquet, Pen Annwn. Not only is Pryderi the central character of the tale of Pwyll, but it is only through Pryderi that we connect together the Four Branches of the Mabinogi. This does not necessarily mean that the writers of the tales had any idea of securing the unity of the Four Branches in this manner.

From a mythological point of view Gwri Gwallt Euryn must be treated apart from Pryderi. His rapid growth and his golden hair are the characteristics of a solar hero, whilst Pryderi, friendly as he is with the powers of darkness, cannot be treated in the same way. There is probably here a fusion of different tales concerning opposed mythological characters whose opposition was not

noticed or understood by the compiler of the tales. This seems likely because there is no explanation given why Pryderi should have been found at the door of Teyrnon's palace. It may very well be, as Professor Anwyl suggests, that one version of the tale made Teyrnon the father of Pryderi. The names Teyrnon and Rhiannon when reduced to their earlier Celtic equivalents, *Tigernonos* and *Rigantona* (*i.e.*, King and Queen) form a pair, a circumstance which warrants Professor Anwyl's suggestion. It does not seem safe to follow these hypotheses too far when based upon slender evidence, as they are apt to lead to contradictions. "Doctors disagree" about Pryderi for instance: for Mr. Nutt suggests that Manawyddan was once credited with being the father of Pryderi. Arguing from Irish analogues to the tale there is substantial ground for the supposition, and in the giving of Rhiannon to Manawyddan to wife in the third tale of the series, we find, according to Mr. Nutt, a trace of the original version of the story.

### Branwen Daughter of Llyr.

The tale of Branwen in itself does not follow directly from Pwyll, but is connected with that tale by the third in the series, Manawyddan. It is true that we do meet again with Pryderi, but he is barely mentioned, and when we attempt to

find the exact relationship between Pwyll and Branwen we are met by evident confusion, as may be seen at once on examining the references to Pendaran Dyfed in both tales.

Bran the Blessed, son of Llyr, is seated one day with his brother Manawyddan, his half-brothers Nissyen the peacemaker and Evnissyen the mischief-maker, on a rock above the sea at Harlech. Thirteen vessels draw near, one of which advancing, makes signs of peace, and in due time Matholwch, King of Ireland, is welcomed on shore as a suitor for the hand of Bran's sister, Branwen. The Irish King is at once accepted, and the marriage feast is held in tents at Aberffraw—in tents because no house large enough for Bran had ever been built. Next day Evnissyen, because his consent to his half-sister's marriage has not been asked, cuts off the lips, ears, tails and eyebrows of Matholwch's horses. Matholwch, surprised and outraged, takes to his ships, but returns on being assured that Bran knew nothing of the insult, and is willing to make ample amends in horses and gold. Bran, seeing that at the feast Matholwch still appears melancholy, supplements his other gifts by that of a magic cauldron which has the power of regenerating by the morrow any dead warrior thrown into it. Matholwch seems pleased. Next evening they fall to talking about the cauldron. Bran informs Matholwch that it was brought from Ireland by Llasar Llaesgyfnewid and his wife Kymideu Kymeinvoll when they escaped from the white-hot iron house in Ireland. Matholwch knows the rest of the history—how one day he was sitting by a lake when an enormous man came up, along with a woman twice as big as he, and bearing a cauldron on his back; how the woman was soon to give birth to a fully-armed warrior; how

these people (and their descendants evidently, although the tale does not state exactly how they multiplied) became a plague in the country: how they were imprisoned in an iron house which was made white hot; how the man and woman alone escaped, and evidently came to Britain, where, adds Bran, they have multiplied and become exceeding fine warriors.

This tale introduces us to new characters. We now meet the family of Llyr, whose fortunes, along with those of the family of Dôn and the family of Pwyll, make up, looked at from this point of view, the Four Branches of the Mabinogi.

Bendigeid Vran owes his appellation, not as a sophisticated Triad informs us, to the fact that he was one of the early Christianisers of the island, but in all probability to his being worshipped at some remote period. He was, seemingly, the tutelary deity of bardism and minstrelsy, and it is only in this light that we can succeed in making anything of the curious passage in the next section of the tale where he carries his musicians across to Ireland on his back.

The tale of the cauldron told during the feasting, which Professor Meyer equates with an incident in the *Mesce Ulad*, a tale of the Ulster heroic cycle, would very naturally be slipped in by the compiler knowingly as an Irish tale, told by an Irish visitor. It has no vital connection with the real tale of Branwen.

Magic cauldrons play a great part in Celtic

literature. The Tuatha De Danaan, possessed one: the poems in the Book of Taliessin, and the prose legend of Taliessin speak of them. One of the Spoils of Annwn, obtained by the Culture-hero seems to have been a magic cauldron, and poetry and inspiration seem to have their origin in a cauldron. Perhaps, as Professor Rhys suggests, this last idea is a relic of the days when the Aryan medicine-man intoxicated himself or worked himself into a state of ecstacy or trance by means of a sacred brewage.

Matholwch takes Branwen to Ireland, and all goes well for a year. Suddenly the question of Evnissyen's outrage is revived, and Branwen is driven from the King's side to the kitchen, where she is struck every morning by the butcher. This goes on for three years unknown to any one in Britain, for all communication has been stopped by Matholwch's orders. Meanwhile Branwen rears a starling, who carries a letter to Bran. Leaving Britain to seven governors, Bran sets out for Ireland; his men are in ships, but he wades across himself, carrying his musicians on his back. (This passage is very obscure, and has probably suffered at the hands of a scribe.) To Matholwch's swineherds the [illegible] and the head of Bran appear like a wood and a [illegible] in advancing: Branwen, however, knows and explains what they are. Matholwch and his men *retreat* across the Llinon (Shannon), which the Britons cross upon Bran's extended body. The Irish submit, but Bran seems unwilling to come to terms until he is won over by the Irish building for him a house big enough for him to enter, a thing never done before. This house is

to be a trap, for men are concealed in bags all round the pillars of the building. Evnissyen, however, finds this out, and deliberately kills, one by one, all the hidden warriors. Peace is concluded in this hall, when suddenly Evnissyen throws Branwen's child into the blazing fire. Tumult and massacre ensue. The Irish make use of the magic cauldron of regeneration until Evnissyen, concealing himself among the Irish dead, is thrown in and bursts it, breaking his own heart in the effort. Seven Britons alone escape, along with Bran, who is wounded by a poisoned lance. He orders the seven to cut off his head and to take it to be buried in the White Hill in London, with the face towards France. On the journey, he tells them, they will be seven years feasting at Harlech, while the birds of Rhiannon will sing to them: at Gwales, in Pembroke they will rest eighty years, until one of them opens a door looking upon Cornwall. With Branwen and the head the seven set out for Britain. On landing in Anglesey, Branwen, thinking upon the misery she has brought to two countries, falls dead of a broken heart. The bearers of the head find that the seven governors have been killed, and they proceed with their journey. Everything turns out as Bran has foretold, and the head is buried in the White Hill at London.'

The tale ends with an obvious appendix explaining how Ireland was repeopled by the offspring of five pregnant women who were the sole remaining inhabitants of Ireland on Branwen's departure.

In this part of the tale Bran alters his mythological character. As a wonderful head, Professor Rhys compares him with the Janus of the Roman Pantheon, and with the Gallo-Roman Cernunnos.

These comparisons are suggestive, but in the last degree hypothetical.

The tale of Branwen as a whole is exceedingly interesting in presenting, as Mr. Nutt points out, remarkable analogies with the Teutonic tales of the Nibelung and Gudrun cycles. It differs in character from the three other tales of the series, for it seems to paint for us pictures of deliberate cruelty—that of the casting of the child into flames, that of Evnissyen's cruelty to the horses, and his cold-blooded way of killing the bagged Irish—which have no parallels in the other tales. Bloodshed there certainly is in Math, but it seems there to be mentioned with regret, while in Branwen, we seem to catch some of the ferocity and fierce lust of blood peculiar to the Teutonic saga.

When Evnissyen fell upon Matholwch's horses, "he cut off their lips at the teeth and their ears close to their heads, and their tails close to their backs: and where he could not lay hold of the eyebrows (here the exact meaning is not clear), he cut them to the bone: and so he disfigured the horses and rendered them useless."

When the two hundred Irish warriors were concealed in bags hanging on the pillars of the festal hall, Evnissyen entered "and scanned the house with fierce and savage looks, and descried the leathern bags which were around the pillars."

"What is in the bag?" asked he of one of the Irish. "Meal, good soul," said he. And Evnissyen felt about it until he came to the man's head, and he squeezed the head until he felt his fingers meet together in the brain through the bones. And he left that one and put his hand upon another, and asked what was therein? "Meal," said the Irishman. So he did the like unto every one of them until he had not left alive of all the two hundred save one only; and when he came to him, he asked what was there? "Meal, good soul," said the Irishman. And he felt about until he felt the head, and he squeezed that head as he had done the others. And albeit he found that the head of this one was armed, he left him not until he had killed him. And then he sang an *Englyn:*

There is in this bag a different sort of meal,
The ready combatant, when the assault is made
By his fellow warriors, prepared for battle.

When peace was being concluded in the hall, and Gwern the son of Branwen and Matholwch was being fondled by all, "Wherefore," said Evnissyen, "comes not my nephew the son of my sister unto me? Though he were not king of Ireland, yet willingly would I fondle the boy." "Cheerfully let him go to thee," said Bendigeid Vran: and the boy went unto him cheerfully. "By my confession to Heaven," said Evnissyen, "unthought

of by the household is the slaughter that I will this instant commit." Then he arose and took up the boy by the feet, and before any one could seize hold of him, he thrust the boy into the blazing fire. And when Branwen saw her son burning in the fire, she strove to leap into the fire also from the place where she sat between her two brothers. But Bendigeid Vran grasped her with one hand, and his shield with the other. Then they all hurried about the house, and never was there made so great a tumult by any host in one house as was made by them, as each man armed himself."

By dint of careful comparison with the various versions of the Teutonic legend, Mr. Nutt has succeeded in proving that the affinities of Branwen are with the more Northern forms, and when seeking to explain how a Welsh tale could be influenced by Northern Teutonic tales, we at once remember the fact, that both coasts of the Irish Sea were under the sway of the Danes and "Northmen" in the ninth and tenth centuries. Whether we accept the theory of the late Irish or of the more purely Welsh origin of the tales, the Danish influence could creep in equally well from Ireland or from Wales. It seems more natural, however, and is more in accordance with the hypothesis given above to take it as coming direct to the Welsh; for the Danes allied themselves with the

Welsh against the Saxons, and appear to have formed considerable permanent settlements around the Welsh coasts. In the peninsula of Gower, for instance, an astonishingly large number of the place-names are of Danish origin.

The Danes therefore may well have told their sagas to the Welsh, and thus the Danish influence crept into the tale of Branwen.

Of course, it is not intended for an instant to say that the tale of Branwen is of Danish origin. Branwen, like the three other tales, is a conglomeration of various elements, the form into which they were finally thrown being alone influenced by the tales of the Northmen. The final incident shows that the tale in its extant form was not put together before the late eleventh century, as the Irish legend which it repeats is an antiquarian invention probably not older than the early part of that century.

## Manawyddan, Son of Llyr.

The next tale, Manawyddan, is a direct continuation of Branwen.

After burying the head of Bran, Manawyddan, one of the seven, turns to Pryderi, also one of the seven, and bewails the fact that he is now landless. Pryderi, however, gives Manawyddan his mother Rhiannon to wife, together with a portion of Dyfed, and for a while

the four—Pryderi and Kicva and Manawyddan and Rhiannon—live very happily.

One evening they seat themselves upon Gorsedd Arberth. A thunderclap is heard, a thick mist arises which passes away to reveal the erstwhile smiling country utterly deserted and bare. They make the best of matters and live comfortably enough for two years, when provisions begin to run short. They now make for Lloegr, supporting themselves by making, first saddles, then shields, and then shoes, each time being driven away by the envy of the other makers of these articles. They eventually return to Arberth, and live for a month upon game. One morning the hunting dogs of Pryderi and Manawyddan follow a boar into a strange castle. In spite of the warning of Manawyddan Pryderi enters it too. There he sees a fountain, to which is chained a golden goblet. Seizing the goblet, his hands cling to it, while his feet are held to the marble slab on which he stands. Manawyddan returns to Arberth alone, and is reproached by Rhiannon, who seeks the castle, and suffers the same fate as Pryderi. A clap of thunder is heard, the castle and all within it disappear.

Kicva and Manawyddan are now left alone. Manawyddan swears to take no advantage of their position, and they set out to become shoemakers once more in Lloegr. Driven back to Dyfed by the jealousy of the other shoemakers, Manawyddan sows some wheat, which, when ripe, is carried away mysteriously. Watching the last of it, he finds that an army of mice, of which he captures one, are responsible for the theft. In spite of the entreaties of Kicva, he resolves to hang this mouse on Gorsedd Arberth, and while in the act of doing so a clerk rides up and endeavours to dissuade him in every way, even offering him much money for the animal. Manawyddan is not to be turned from his

purpose, and a priest who rides up later has no better success than the clerk. Finally, with a bishop, Manawyddan makes a bargain. He will release the mouse if the bishop will bring back Pryderi and Rhiannon, explain his interest in the mouse, restore everything to its former condition, and swear to seek no vengeance in the future. This is done. The mouse is the wife of the bishop, who is himself Llwyd Kil Coed, a friend of Gwal fab Clud, and the enchantment of Dyfed and the rape of Pryderi and Rhiannon are in revenge for the treatment of Gwawl by the father of Pryderi as told in the tale of Pwyll.

The tale ends with a phrase indicating the existence of a variant version, where greater prominence is evidently given to the doings of Pryderi and Rhiannon during the time of the enchantment.

In the tale of Manawyddan we have on the largest scale that peculiar element of magic which so charmed the world later in the Arthurian romances of France. Here we have a whole province depopulated and laid waste for years by enchantment, and the event is written of quite soberly, and treated as quite a matter of course, as, indeed, are all the other magical incidents of the tales.

Mythologically, Llwyd Kil Coed, although his name means the Grey One, appears as a friend of Gwawl fab Clud, a solar hero, as we have seen; Llwyd, therefore, is to be called a solar hero. Pryderi, the darker divinity, and Rhiannon, the moon-goddess, fall into his power. Manawyddan

—the Manannan mac Lir of Ireland, Lord of the Otherworld—is here shorn of all his magic attributes, and although he sets Pryderi and Rhiannon free, he seems to do so only by human foresight and cunning, and not by magic spells.

## Math, Son of Mathonwy.

The tale of Math introduces us to the cycle of legends centring round the children of Dôn—the cycle which seems to have been either the greatest in extent or that which was most popular, for we find more references in the poetry to the characters of the story of Math than to those of any other of the Four Branches.

The plainest and most obvious reference to incidents in the Mabinogion occurs in connection with this tale. It is to be found in poem xvi. of the so-called Book of Taliessin. We give Mr. Skene's translation of it, and it will serve as a fair example of the style of the "Taliessin" poems.

The most skilful man ever heard of
Gwydyon ab Don, of toiling spirits,
Enchanted a woman from blossoms,
And brought pigs from the south.
Since he had no sheltering cots,
Rapid curves and plaited chains,
He made the forms of horses
From the springing
Plants, and illustrious saddles.

When are judged the chairs
Excelling them will be mine;
My chair, my cauldron and my laws
And my pervading eloquence meet for the chair.
I am called skilful in the court of Dôn
I and Euronwy and Euron.
I saw a fierce conflict in Nant Ffrangcon
On a Sunday at the time of dawn
Between the bird of wrath and Gwydyon,
Thursday certainly, they went to Mona
To obtain whirlings and sorcerers.
Arianrod, of laudable aspect, dawn of serenity,
The greatest disgrace evidently on the side of the Brython.

It is easy to recognise the references to the incidents in Math, and it is equally easy to understand, even from the above instance, which is comparatively simple, why these poems, in the sections which are not explained by the tales, are called obscure.

Math, Head of Gwynedd, could only rest with his feet in a virgin's lap, and the virgin who performed this task was Goewin, the most beautiful girl of her time. Gilvaethwy, son of Dôn, confesses his love (under difficulties, for Math can hear every whisper that the wind reaches) for Goewin to his brother Gwydion, and the latter promises, in default of other means, to raise the South in order to get Math off to war and so enable Gilvaethwy to work his will. Gwydion then sets off for South Wales with the ostensible object of obtaining from Pryderi some new animals which the latter had evidently obtained from Annwn. These animals are pigs. Disguising themselves as bards, Gwydion and

his companions are well received at Pryderi's court, but are not successful in obtaining the desired animals as a boon. Finally they receive them in exchange for dogs and horses marvellously equipped, which Gwydion manufactures by enchantment. The tale now traces Gwydion's return journey northward, through all the places whose names are connected with pigs. The enchanted horses and dogs only keep their shape for a little while, and the army of Pryderi is soon in Gwynedd. Math marches out to meet the Southerners, and Gilvaethwy immediately takes the opportunity of having his will of Goewin. A terrible battle ensues in favour of the men of Gwynedd: a truce is agreed upon, but is broken by the victors, and finally a duel is arranged between Gwydion and Pryderi, in which the latter is slain chiefly through Gwydion's magic power. The people of the South seek their homes in sorrow.

On his return to his court Math discovers the treachery of Gilvaethwy and Gwydion. As a recompense to Goewin, Math takes her to wife, while he metes out a dreadful punishment to Gilvaethwy and Gwydion. For one year he transforms them into a couple of deer: for a second into a couple of pigs: for a third into a couple of wolves, and in each of these wild states they have issue, creatures turned into human beings later by the magic wand of Math. At the end of the third year the two brothers are allowed to return to their proper shapes.

Math now seeks another virgin foot-holder, and Arianrhod, daughter of Dôn, is suggested. Math, by aid of his magic powers, discovers that she is no virgin, and fleeing from the proof, she gives birth to two male children. One is Dylan Eil Ton (Dylan son of the Wave), who makes at once for the sea, and who is slain at some unknown time, by his uncle Govannon. The other, concealed and nurtured by Gwydion, grows

remarkably fast, and is taken by him to Arianrhod's castle. On being told who the child is, Arianrhod says he will never be named except by her. Gwydion, calling his magic powers again to his aid, obtains a ship and material for shoemaking, and seeks, disguised, along with the boy, the castle of Arianrhod. Dissatisfied with the intentionally ill-fitting shoes sent her by Gwydion, she comes herself to the ship, and seeing the boy strike a bird cleverly she says, "With a sure hand the lion hit the bird." Gwydion immediately declares that the boy has been named the Lion of the sure Hand (Llew Llaw Gyffes), and the enchanted articles suddenly vanish. Arianrhod now declares that the boy shall never be given arms, except by her. Gwydion again gets the better of Arianrhod by entering her castle disguised along with Llew and causing an enchanted hostile fleet to appear. In fear of attack Arianrhod and her maids arm Llew and Gwydion, whereupon the latter informs Arianrhod of what she has done, and the enchanted fleet disappears. This time the incensed Arianrhod declares that Llew shall never have a wife except of her bestowing. But Math and Gwydion fashion him a bride from flowers, and she is called Blodeuwedd. Math gives the couple broad lands in Gwynedd.

One day, during Llew's absence, Gronw Pefr, Lord of Penllyn, seeks hospitality of Blodeuwedd, and the pair conceive and enjoy a guilty love. Gronw induces Blodeuwedd to worm out of Llew the secret of the only way in which he can be killed. She finds that only a javelin, fashioned in a year's time, and worked upon solely during Sunday mass, can serve to wound him: besides, this javelin can only harm him when standing at the side of a bath on a river bank with one foot on the back of a buck and the other on the side of the bath. Gronw prepares the javelin, and when it is ready

Blodeuwedd persuades her spouse to show her exactly how the fatal blow would have to be dealt. Gronw, hidden behind a rock, casts the javelin at the right moment, and Llew, uttering a great cry, flies away in the guise of a bird. Gronw then enters into possession of Llew's lands.

Math and Gwydion are sorely grieved when the news of this reaches them, and Gwydion sets out to seek for Llew. Hearing of a sow in Arvon that every morning goes on a mysterious journey, Gwydion one day follows her, and is led to a place (called by a wrong derivation Nant-y-Llew) where an eagle sits dropping carrion from a tree. Gwydion sings some verses to the bird, which descends on his knee, and at a touch from his magic wand becomes a wasted Llew. In a year's time Llew has completely recovered, and marches out to take vengeance upon Gronw and his untrue wife. The latter flies before him, along with her maidens, who are all drowned in Llyn y Morwynion, and is finally turned by Gwydion, as a punishment for her sins, into an owl. To this day the owl is called Blodeuwedd. Gronw seeks to offer recompense to Llew, but the latter will hear of nothing except that Gronw shall allow a blow to be dealt him in the same way as he dealt the blow to Llew. After seeking in vain to find a substitute Gronw submits, but begs to be allowed to interpose a flat stone between him and the blow. In spite of the stone Llew's javelin is driven home: Gronw is killed, and to this day the pierced stone remains, and is known as Llech Gronw. Llew recovers his domains and governs happily, finally becoming Lord of Gwynedd.

The tale of Math, although not containing "magic" on quite so grand a scale as Manawyddan,

is yet more deeply saturated with it, for almost every incident in the tale turns upon magic. This is only to be expected at the court of Math, where the two greatest magicians known to Welsh legend, Math himself and Gwydion, are to be found.

Math, son of Mathonwy, is the greatest of all the mythological characters to be found in the Mabinogi. He is called by Professor Rhys the Celtic Zeus. His characteristics in the tale are justice and magnanimity. He is referred to in the poems, and given the epithet Hên, an epithet which we have noticed in the case of Heveidd as being applied to characters of the old mythology dimly perceived as such by the compilers of the tales.

Gwydion may be treated as a culture-hero introducing into his country valuable animals for the first time. Pigs appear, from various indications, to have been of great importance to the Welsh, and Gwydion is represented as gaining them by craft from Pryderi, who himself had obtained them from Annwn, whence all things of value to man are supposed ultimately to come.

We have already mentioned the identification of the children of Dôn with the Tuatha De Danaan. Llew Llaw Gyffes, a grandson of Dôn, is identified with the Irish Lug Laim-fada, Gyffes apparently meaning something more like "long" than "sure." The proper form of his name is not Llew, but

Lleu. Lleu probably meant light, and is apparently the same root as we have in the Welsh words, *Goleu* and *Lleufer*, meaning light, and *Lleuad*, the moon. Lleu is an appropriate designation for the sun-god. His disappearance, caused by Gronw Pefr, is the temporary victory of the powers of darkness: his being brought back by Gwydion is no uncommon feat for the Culture-hero, whom, in this case, we have seen patronising the sun-god all through.

In commenting upon these tales mythological origin and significance have been assumed for them, and they have been interpreted in the terms of that struggle between light and darkness, which, however exaggerated an importance may have been given to it, undoubtedly supplies the motive for a large portion of our mythologies. It should, however, be noted that in Ireland the Tuatha de Danaan, whom we have equated with the races of Dôn and Llyr, appear rather as powers of life and increase generally than specifically as powers of light. In any case, too, it should be clearly understood that the Welsh tales, if mythological, are, as we have pointed out, "degraded" mythology. Myths originally independent seem to have become fused, and in the process to have altered their primitive character and import. Nor is it implied that the bardic story-telling class had any belief in

the stories as mythology, however tenaciously they, with the conservatism of the literary class in primitive communities, clung to the traditional framework and incidents. All idea of a bardic esoteric doctrine involving pre-Christian mythic philosophy must be utterly discarded. The bardic class in Wales, as in Ireland, was in so far pre-Christian, as, like the rest of their countrymen, Christianity had only affected them superficially. Their attachment to the old legends, though often undoubtedly frowned upon by the clerical class, is the natural attachment to old tribal tradition of the men who were, by training and calling, the appointed guardians and proclaimers of that tradition. Outside their professional interests, which in Wales, as in Ireland, never seem to have led to any serious conflict with the clergy, the bards were as good, or as bad Christians as their fellows.

But even if all mythological significance refused to the Mabinogion they have, apart from their intrinsic charm, an immense interest for the student of romantic literature. As we have seen, they almost certainly belong, in the present form, to a period antedating the year 1100. Now, they contain many story-themes, incidents, and scenes which figure in the great fairy-tale store common to all Europe, to a large part of Asia and to a portion of Africa. In especial they present most

marked points of contact with such portions of that fairy-tale store as have been recovered from the Gaelic-speaking peasants of Ireland and Scotland. It has been asserted, with a vigour generally in precise proportion with the assertor's ignorance of early Celtic literature, that the fairy tales collected orally in modern Gaeldom are comparatively late importations from the Continent, which in its turn received them comparatively late from the East. One valuable feature of early Welsh, as of early Irish literature is the exhibition of what may be called fairy-tale themes bound up with the earliest traditions of the race, and recorded at a date preceding the great contact of West with East in the late eleventh-thirteenth centuries, to which the introduction of so many romantic themes into Europe has been ascribed.

Finally, a word must be said as to the literary merit of these tales. They are admirable examples of story-telling; the main thread of incident is presented clearly and vigorously; there is no lack of picturesque description; the personages, when we consider their fairy-tale nature, are well differentiated and characterised; the whole atmosphere of illusion, glamour, and fantasy is admirably rendered. It would be hard to overmatch in its way the closing incident of Manawyddan, no matter what literature we turn to. This excellence of prose narrative is extremely remarkable in view of

the date, eleventh century, or at latest early twelfth century, to which we must assign the redaction of these tales in their extant form. There are no examples of either French, German, or English prose narrative of the period which we can adduce by way of comparison. Irish and Scandinavian literature alone offer parallels, and in the case of Scandinavia we cannot be sure how much of pre-twelfth century form is retained in what has come down to us. The mythological tales of Snorri's Edda, for instance—the most perfect examples of their style of story-telling in the whole range of literature—how far are their surpassing merits to be attributed to the Scandinavian story-tellers of the tenth and eleventh centuries? Or are they due to the literary genius of the thirteenth century Snorri? If we compare the two literatures as presumably of the same age, the comparison is by no means to the disadvantage of the Welsh. If the Mabinogion have not the realistic virility, the sober picturesqueness, the weight and import of the best examples of Scandinavian story-telling, they have an indefinable charm, a delicate precision of outline and colour, a special glamour of their own to which the others cannot pretend.

Comparison with Irish literature is even more interesting. The Irish tales are certainly older alike in component elements and in redaction, and they have most certainly exercised a marked

influence upon the Welsh ones. But Ireland has left us no examples of story-telling as perfect in their way as those of Wales. The conventions are far more rigid, far more strenuously adhered to and insisted upon. Thus the Irish tales have more of the accidental, the modishness of the time. In the one case we have stories, the full appeal of which can only be felt by men familiar with a very elaborate and artificial set of conventions; in others the universal story-loving instinct has scarcely any conventional obstacles of presentment to overcome. It may be noted that besides the strongly conventionalised form of narrative in which most of the Irish heroico-mythic sagas have come down to us, Ireland can also show a number of historic tales as straightforward and natural as the Welsh Mabinogion, with a vein of vigorous realism almost as marked as that of the Scandinavian saga tellers. But the official representatives of Irish literature, the court story-tellers, preferred the artificial conventionalised forms of narrative. This fact supplies another argument against the theory which would make the Mabinogion a mere imitative offshoot of Irish literature. If so, they could not have escaped the peculiarities of style and presentment which distinguish Irish story-telling as practised by its chief official representatives in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries.

Thus we may regard the Mabinogion as frag-

ments of the old mythic world of our British forefathers; we may consider them simply as links in that chain of Celtic romance which stretches uninterruptedly from the court *file* or *ollamh* of sixth-century Ireland to the living peasant narrator of Connemara or Argyllshire; or we may read them as delightful examples of fairy-tale telling. Whatever view we take of them, the more we know of them, the greater the interest they arouse, the more enduring the charm they exercise.

# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

LADY CHARLOTTE GUEST'S edition of the *Mabinogion*, published in three volumes at Llandovery in 1849, still remains the only edition containing text and English translation, and is therefore the best edition for English readers. It likewise contains interesting notes which may still be consulted with advantage, although their standpoint is now somewhat antiquated. The translation alone, with a selection of the notes, may be had in one volume, roy. 8vo, 1879. The collection, edited and commented upon by Mr. Alfred Nutt, will shortly be included in Messrs. Dent's "Temple Classics." For those who intend making a serious study of the Mabinogion, M. Joseph Loth's French translation, 2 vols. 8vo, 1889, is indispensable. M. Loth's version is, on the whole, closer than that of Lady Guest, and in especial more faithful in the very few passages which Lady Guest omitted or softened for reasons of delicacy. M. Loth also provides a larger and more critically sifted mass of illustrative material in the Welsh genealogies and extracts from the chronicles (the so-called Bruts), the Triads, and the other Mediæval Welsh literature.

Professor Rhys and Mr. J. Gwenogfryn Evans have published a *diplomatic edition* of the Red Book text, Oxford, 1887, while reprints of the other manuscripts are just through the press. A *critical edition* of the Mabinogion has long been promised.

The *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* have been done into modern Welsh by Mr. J. M. Edwards, Wrexham, 1896.

For the mythological interpretation of the tales and the identification of Welsh and Irish characters, see Professor Rhys' *Hibbert Lectures*, London, 1888, and especially his *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*. In connection with these works it would also be well to read the other side of the whole question as contained in Mr. Andrew Lang's *Custom and Myth*, Longman's Silver Library, 1898. Compare, for instance, the chapter headed the *Myth of Cronus* with the last chapter of the *Hibbert Lectures*. Mr. Lang's article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* on *Mythology* contains much general and historical information on the subject.

Mr. Alfred Nutt's Essay on the *Celtic Doctrine of Rebirth, &c.*, contained in Messrs. Meyer's and Nutt's *Voyage of Bran*, 2 vols., London, 1895–7, contains a wealth of material dealing with the interpretation of Celtic legend and its relation to the legends of other literatures. Ch. xiii. contains a comparison of the Manawyddan-Pwyll-Pryderi story with the North Irish Mongan Saga. The same author's study on *Branwen* in the *Folk-Lore Record* for 1882 deals with the question of the Teutonic element in Branwen, and in general with the historic conditions underlying the romantic presentment in the Mabinogi.

Professor Anwyl's articles on the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* are now running in the *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, i. 1, &c. In them, so far, Professor Anwyl has endeavoured to trace the original stories from the fragments of which the Mabinogi were pieced together.

Professor Meyer's theories in regard to the relationship between Goidel and Brython, as opposed to those of

Professor Rhys, are to be found in an article in the *Cymmrodor* for 1895-6.

The early Welsh poetry is only accessible to the English reader in the *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, edited and translated by Skene, 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1868. This is by no means a good critical work, and critical editions of the early poetry are badly wanted.

The Welsh text of some of the poetry is also contained in the *Myvyrian Archæology*, London, 3 vols., 1801. This work also contains the *Bruts* and *Triads*. The *Rhys-Evans diplomatic edition of the Red Book*, that which contains the *Mabinogion*, also contains the *Bruts* and *Triads*.

Mr. G. J. Evans has edited a facsimile edition of the oldest Welsh MS., the Black Book of Carmarthen, dating from the last quarter of the twelfth century. This MS. contains the oldest text of the *Verses of the Graves*.

The dating of the poems to which we have referred has been done by M. Joseph Loth in an article in the *Révue Celtique* for January, 1900, and in the second volume of his *Métrique galloise*. His forthcoming edition of the *Black Book of Carmarthen* will no doubt contain new and fruitful contributions to the same end.

The Irish section of the *Cours de la littérature celtique* of M. D'Arbois de Jubainville—I. *Introduction*. II. *Le cycle mythologique irlandais*. V. *L'épopée celtique en Irlande*. VI. *La civilisation des Celtes et la civilisation homérique*. VII. and VIII. *Etudes sur le droit celtique*—forms a library of Irish antiquities (literary history, mythology, social and legal organisation) of great value to the student.

Professor Rhys' *Celtic Folk-lore, Welsh and Manx*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1901, contains much valuable matter on the Mabinogion from a folk-lore point of view.

The only attempt at a hand-book of Welsh literature is Stephens' *Literature of the Kymry*, 1876, a work which is no guide at all for the early periods. There is also a short summary chapter in Professor Rhys' and Mr. Brynmôr Jones' *Welsh People*, London, 1899. But practically it may be said that the problems of Welsh literary history from the tenth to the thirteenth century have not been seriously grappled with. A beginning has been made with the indispensable ground-work, the critical editing of the text. Until that is accomplished, and until such studies as M. Loth's upon the metrics, of Mr. Evans upon palæography, and of Professor Zimmer and other German scholars upon the linguistic features of mediæval Welsh literature have been completed and tested, it is impossible to do more than offer tentative expositions and interpretations. There is plenty of work for young Welsh scholars in the critical examination of the considerable, interesting, and often delightful literature produced in Wales during the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries.

CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES (page 3).

*See* No. 4 of this series: King Arthur and his Knights.

SPREAD OF THE ARTHUR LEGEND (page 5).

*See* No. 1 of this series: Celtic and Mediæval Romance.

TUATHA DE DANAAN (page 12).

For a full discussion of the nature of these beings *see* ch. xvii. of the *Voyage of Bran*, and No. 8 of this series: The Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare.

MESCE ULAD (page 13).

This tale relates an incursion of the Ulster warriors in a fit of drunken frenzy into Connaught. They are assigned an iron house for the night, and the

Connaught men endeavour to roast them in it. A similar incident occurs in the tale known as the *Destruction of Dindrig*, the personages of which are assigned to the fifth century B.C. In the first case the device fails; in the second it succeeds.

MYTHOLOGICAL IRISH CYCLE (page 16).

The reference is to the story entitled *The Second Battle of Moytura*, edited and translated by Dr. Whitley Stokes, *Révue Celtique*, vol. xii. 1895.

RESEMBLANCES OF IRISH-WELSH ROMANCES (page 18).

The more superficial resemblances alluded to in the text are more marked in stories like *Kulhwch* or the *Dream of Rhonabwy* than in the Four Branches of the Mabinogi. The enumerative method, the triadic groupings which are such striking features in *Kulhwch* are equally striking in sagas like *Bruden da Derga* (now being edited and translated by Dr. Whitley Stokes in the *Révue Celtique*), or *Mesce Ulad* (edited and translated by the late W. M. Henessey, Todd Lectures, vol. i.).

ANNWN (HADES) (page 21).

For the whole question of the Otherworld in Celtic Myth *see* the first volume of the *Voyage of Bran*.

MAGIC CAULDRONS (page 29).

*See* Professor Rhys' *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* and Mr. Nutt's *Legend of the Holy Grail*.

ESOTERIC BARDISM (page 45).

The nonsense talked upon the subject is largely due to the uncritical inventions of pseudo-antiquaries of the 16th to 17th and 18th centuries, uncritical inventions which

occupy much the same plane of conception as the Rosicrucian and Free Masonic fancies of the 17th and 18th century.

FAIRY TALE TRACES IN THE MABINOGION.

These are fully enumerated and discussed in vol. iv. of J. F. Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands.*

THE CONVENTIONAL ELEMENT IN IRISH STORY-TELLING (page 48).

For an admirable example of the *genre see* the already cited *Bruden da Derga:* for an example of the shocking depths to which it descended when the conventions had been worn to death, *see* the twelfth century *Battle of Magh Ruth*, edited and translated by O'Donovan, Dublin, 1852.

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# THE EDDA

## I. THE DIVINE MYTHOLOGY OF THE NORTH

THE Icelandic Eddas are the only vernacular record of Germanic heathendom as it developed during the four centuries which in England saw the destruction of nearly all traces of the heathen system. The so-called Elder Edda is a collection of some thirty poems, mythic and heroic in substance, interspersed with short pieces of prose, which survives in a thirteenth-century MS., known as the Codex Regius, discovered in Iceland in 1642; to these are added other poems of similar character from other sources. The Younger Edda is a prose paraphrase of, and commentary on, these poems and others which are lost, together with a treatise on metre, written by the historian Snorri Sturluson about 1220.

This use of the word Edda is incorrect and unhistorical, though convenient and sanctioned by the use of several centuries. It was early used as a general term for the rules and materials for versemaking, and applied in this sense to Snorri's

work. When the poems on which his paraphrase is founded were discovered, Icelandic scholars by a misunderstanding applied the name to them also; and as they attributed the collection quite arbitrarily to the historian Saemund (1056–1133), it was long known as Saemundar Edda, a name now generally discarded in favour of the less misleading titles of Elder or Poetic Edda. From its application to this collection, the word derives a more extended use, (1) as a general term for Norse mythology; (2) as a convenient name to distinguish the simpler style of these anonymous narrative poems from the elaborate formality of the Skalds.

The poems of the Edda are certainly older than the MS., although the old opinion as to their high antiquity is untenable. The majority probably date from the tenth century in their present form; this dating does not necessitate the ascription of the shape in which the legends are presented, still less of their substance, to that period. With regard to the place of their composition opinions vary widely, Norway, the British Isles and Greenland having all found champions; but the evidence is rather questionable, and I incline to leave them to the country which has preserved them. They are possibly of popular origin; this, together with their epic or narrative character, would account for the striking absence from them of some of the chief characteristics of Skaldic poetry: the obscuring of

the sense by the elaborate interlacing of sentences and the extensive use of kennings or mythological synonyms, and the complication of the metre by such expedients as the conjunction of end-rhyme with alliteration. Eddic verse is governed solely by the latter, and the strophic arrangement is simple, only two forms occurring: (1) couplets of alliterative-short lines; (2) six-line strophes, consisting of a couplet followed by a single short line, the whole repeated.

Roughly speaking, the first two-fifths of the MS. is mythological, the rest heroic. I propose to observe this distinction, and to deal in this study with the stories of the Gods. In this connexion, Snorri's Edda and the mythical Ynglinga Saga may also be considered, but as both were compiled a couple of centuries or more after the introduction of Christianity into Iceland, it is uncertain how much in them is literary explanation of tradition whose meaning was forgotten; some also, especially in Snorri, is probably pure invention, fairy tale rather than myth.

Many attempts have been made to prove that the material of the Edda is largely borrowed. The strength and distinction of Icelandic poetry rest rather on the fact that it is original and national and, like that of Greece, owes little to foreign sources; and that it began in the heathen age, before Christian or Romantic influences had touched Iceland. Valuable as the early Christian poetry

of England is, we look in vain there for the humour, the large-minded simplicity of motive, the suggestive character-drawing, the swift dramatic action, which are as conspicuous in many poems in the Edda as in many of the Sagas.

Omitting the heroic poems, there are in Codex Regius the following: (1) Of a more or less comprehensive character, *Völuspa*, *Vafthrudnismal*, *Grimnismal*, *Lokasenna*, *Harbardsljod*; (2) dealing with episodes, *Hymiskvida*, *Thrymskvida*, *Skirnisför*. *Havamal* is a collection of proverbs, but contains two interpolations from mythical poems; *Alvissmal*, which, in the form of a dialogue between Thor and a dwarf Alviss, gives a list of synonyms, is a kind of mythologico-poetical glossary. Several of these poems are found in another thirteenth-century vellum fragment, with an additional one, variously styled *Vegtamskvida* or *Baldr's Dreams*; the great fourteenth-century codex Flateybook contains *Hyndluljod*, partly genealogical, partly an imitation of *Völuspa*; and one of the MSS. of Snorri's Edda gives us *Rigsthula*.

*Völuspa*, though not one of the earliest poems, forms an appropriate opening. Metrical considerations forbid an earlier date than the first quarter of the eleventh century, and the last few lines are still later. The material is, however, older: the poem is an outline, in allusions often obscure to us, of traditions and beliefs familiar to its first hearers.

The very bareness of the outline is sufficient proof that the material is not new. The framework is apparently imitated from that of the poem known as *Baldr's Dreams*, some lines from which are inserted in *Völuspa*. This older poem describes Odin's visit to the Sibyl in hell-gates to inquire into the future. He rides down to her tomb at the eastern door of Nifl-hell and chants spells, until she awakes and asks: "What man unknown to me is that, who has troubled me with this weary journey? Snow has snowed on me, rain has beaten me, dew has drenched me, I have long been dead." He gives the name Wegtam, or Way-wise, and then follow question and answer until she discovers his identity and will say no more. In *Völuspa* there is no descriptive introduction, and no dialogue; the whole is spoken by the Sibyl, who plunges at once into her story, with only the explanatory words: "Thou, Valfather, wouldst have me tell the ancient histories of men as far as I remember." She describes the creation of the world and sky by Bor's sons; the building by the Gods of a citadel in Ida-plain, and their age of innocence till three giant-maids brought greed of gold; the creation of the dwarfs; the creation of the first man and woman out of two trees by Odin, Hoeni and Lodur; the world-ash and the spring beside it where dwell the three Norns who order the fates of men. Then follows an allusion to the

war between the Aesir and the Vanir, the battle with the giants who had got possession of the goddess Freyja, and the breaking of bargains; an obscure reference to Mimi's spring where Odin left his eye as a pledge; and an enumeration of his war-maids or Valkyries. Turning to the future, the Sibyl prophesies the death of Baldr, the vengeance on his slayer, and the chaining of Loki, the doom of the Gods and the destruction of the world at the coming of the fire-giants and the release of Loki's children from captivity. The rest of the poem seems to be later; it tells how the earth shall rise again from the deep, and the Aesir dwell once more in Odin's halls, and there is a suggestion of Christian influence in it which is absent from the earlier part.

Of the other general poems, the next four were probably composed before 950; in each the setting is different. *Vafthrudnismal*, a riddle-poem, shows Odin in a favourite position, seeking in disguise for knowledge of the future. Under the name of Gangrad (Wanderer), he visits the wise giant Vafthrudni, and the two agree to test their wisdom: the one who fails to answer a question is to forfeit his head. In each case the questions deal first with the past. Vafthrudni asks about Day and Night, and the river which divides the Giants from the Gods, matters of common knowledge; and then puts a question as to the future: "What is the

plain where Surt and the blessed Gods shall meet in battle?" Odin replies, and proceeds to question in his turn; first about the creation of Earth and Sky, the origin of Sun and Moon, Winter and Summer, the Giants and the Winds; the coming of Njörd the Wane to the Aesir as a hostage; the Einherjar, or chosen warriors of Valhalla. Then come prophetic questions on the destruction of the Sun by the wolf Fenri, the Gods who shall rule in the new world after Ragnarök, the end of Odin. The poem is brought to a close by Odin's putting the question which only himself can answer: "What did Odin say in his son's ear before he mounted the pyre?" and the giant's head is forfeit.

In the third poem of this class, *Grimnismal*, a prose introduction relates that Odin and Frigg quarrelled over the merits of their respective foster-children. To settle the question, Odin goes disguised as Grimni, "the Hooded One," to visit his foster-son Geirröd; but Frigg, to justify her charge of inhospitality against Geirröd, sends her maiden Fulla to warn him against the coming stranger. Odin therefore meets with a harsh reception, and is bound between two fires in the hall. Geirröd's young son, Agnar, protests against this rude treatment, and gives wine to the guest, who then begins to instruct him in matters concerning the Gods. He names the halls of the Aesir, describes Valhalla and the ash Yggdrasil, the

Valkyries, the creation of the world (two stanzas in common with *Vafthrudnismal*), and enumerates his own names. The poem ends with impressive abruptness by his turning to Geirröd:

"Thou art drunk, Geirröd, thou hast drunk too deep; thou art bereft of much since thou hast lost my favour, the favour of Odin and all the Einherjar. I have told thee much, but thou hast minded little. Thy friends betray thee: I see my friend's sword lie drenched in blood. Now shall Odin have the sword-weary slain; I know thy life is ended, the Fates are ungracious. Now thou canst see Odin: come near me, if thou canst."

[Prose.] "King Geirröd sat with his sword on his knee, half drawn. When he heard that Odin was there, he stood up and would have led Odin from the fires. The sword slipt from his hand; the hilt turned downwards. The king caught his foot and fell forwards, the sword standing towards him, and so he met his death. Then Odin went away, and Agnar was king there long afterwards."

*Harbardsljod* is a dialogue, and humorous. Thor on his return from the east comes to a channel, at the farther side of which stands Odin, disguised as a ferryman, Greybeard. He refuses to ferry Thor across, and they question each other as to their past feats, with occasional threats from Thor and taunts from Odin, until the former goes off vowing vengeance on the ferryman:

THOR. "Thy skill in words would serve thee ill if I waded across the water; I think thou wouldst cry

louder than the wolf, if thou shouldst get a blow from the hammer."

ODIN. "Sif has a lover at home, thou shouldst seek him. That is a task for thee to try, it is more proper for thee."

THOR. "Thou speakest what thou knowest most displeasing to me; thou cowardly fellow, I think that thou liest."

ODIN. "I think I speak true; thou art slow on the road. Thon wouldst have got far, if thou hadst started at dawn."

THOR. "Harbard, scoundrel, it is rather thou who hast delayed me."

ODIN. "I never thought a shepherd could so delay Asa-Thor's journey."

THOR. "I will counsel thee: row thy boat hither. Let us cease quarrelling; come and meet Magni's father."

ODIN. "Leave thou the river; crossing shall be refused thee."

THOR. "Show me the way, since thou wilt not ferry me."

ODIN. "That is a small thing to refuse. It is a long way to go: a while to the stock, and another to the stone, then keep to the left hand till thou reach Verland. There will Fjörgyn meet her son Thor, and she will tell him the highway to Odin's land."

THOR. "Shall I get there to-day?"

ODIN. "With toil and trouble thou wilt get there about sunrise, as I think."

THOR. "Our talk shall be short, since thou answerest with mockery. I will reward thee for refusing passage, if we two meet again."

ODIN. "Go thy way, where all the fiends may take thee."

*Lokasenna* also is in dialogue form. A prose introduction tells how the giant Oegi, or Gymi, gave a feast to the Aesir. Loki was turned out for killing a servant, but presently returned and began to revile the Gods and Goddesses, each one in turn trying to interfere, only to provoke a taunt from Loki. At last Thor, who had been absent on a journey, came in and threatened the slanderer with his hammer, whereupon Loki said, "I spoke to the Aesir and the sons of the Aesir what my mind told me; but for thee alone I will go away, for I know thou wilt strike." Some of the poem is rather pointless abuse, but much touches points already suggested in the other poems.

*Hyndluljod* is much later than the others, probably not before 1200. The style is late, and the form imitated from *Völuspá*. It describes a visit paid by Freyja to the Sibyl to learn the genealogy of her favourite Ottar. The larger part deals with heroic genealogies, but there are scanty allusions to Baldr, Frey, Heimdal, Loki's children, and Thor, and a Christian reference to a God who shall come after Ragnarök "when Odin shall meet the wolf." It tells nothing new.

We have here then, omitting *Hyndluljod*, five poems (four of them belonging to the first half of the tenth century) which suggest a general outline of Norse mythology: there is a hierarchy of Gods, the Aesir, who live together in a citadel, Odin

being the chief. Among them are several who are not Aesir by origin: Njörd and his son and daughter, Frey and Freyja, are Vanir; Loki is really an enemy and an agent in their fall; and there are one or two Goddesses of giant race. The giants are rivals and enemies to the Gods; the dwarfs are also antagonistic, but in bondage. The meeting-place of the Gods is by the World-Ash, Yggdrasil, on whose well-being the fate of Gods and men depends; at its root lies the World-Snake. The Gods have foreknowledge of their own doom, Ragnarök, the great fight when they shall meet Loki's children, the Wolf and the Snake; both sides will fall and the world be destroyed. An episode in the story is the death of Baldr. This we may assume to be the religion of the Viking age (800–1000 A.D.), a compound of the beliefs of various ages and tribes.

**The Aesir.**—The number of the Aesir is not fixed. *Hyndluljod* says there were twelve ("there were eleven Aesir when Baldr went down into the howe"). Snorri gives a list of fourteen Aesir or Gods (Odin, Thor, Baldr, Njörd, Frey, Tyr, Bragi, Heimdal, Höd, Vidar, Vali, Ullr, Forseti, Loki), and adds Hoeni in another list, all the fifteen occurring in the poems; and sixteen Goddesses (Ásynjor), the majority of whom are merely personified epithets, occurring nowhere else. Of the sixteen, Frigg, Gefion, Freyja and Saga (really an

epithet only) are Goddesses in the poems, and Fulla is Frigg's handmaid. In another chapter, Snorri adds Idunn, Gerd, Sigyn and Nanna, of whom the latter does not appear in the Elder Edda, where Idunn, Gerd (a giantess) and Sigyn are the wives of Bragi, Frey and Loki; and two others, the giantess Skadi and Sif, are the wives of Njörd and Thor.

A striking difference from classical mythology is that neither Tyr (who should etymologically be the Sky-god), nor Thor (the Thunder-god), takes the highest place. Tyr is the hero of one important episode, the chaining of the Wolf, through which he loses his right hand. This is told in full by Snorri and alluded to in *Lokasenna*, both in the prose preface ("Tyr also was there, with only one hand; the Fenris-wolf had bitten off the other, when he was bound") and in the poem itself:

> LOKI. "I must remember that right hand which Fenri bit off thee."
>
> TYR. "I am short of a hand, but thou of the famous wolf; to each the loss is ill-luck. Nor is the wolf in better plight, for he must wait in bonds till Ragnarök."

Otherwise, he only appears in connexion with two more popular Gods: he speaks in Frey's defence in *Lokasenna*, and in *Hymiskvida* he is Thor's companion in the search for a cauldron; the latter poem represents him as a giant's son.

Thor, on the other hand, is second only to his

father Odin; he is the strongest of the Gods and their champion against the giants, and his antagonist at Ragnarök is to be the World-Snake. Like Odin, he travels much, but while the chief God generally goes craftily and in disguise, to gain knowledge or test his wisdom, Thor's errands are warlike; in *Lokasenna* he is absent on a journey, in *Harbardsljod* and *Alvissmal* he is returning from one. His journeys are always to the east; so in *Harbardsljod:* "I was in the east, fighting the malevolent giant-brides. . . . I was in the east and guarding the river, when Svarang's sons attacked me." The Giants live in the east (*Hymiskvida* 5); Thor threatened Loki: "I will fling thee up into the east, and no one shall see thee more" (*Lokasenna* 59); the fire-giants at Ragnarök are to come from the east: "Hrym comes driving from the east, he lifts his shield before him. . . . A ship comes from the east, Muspell's sons will come sailing over the sea, and Loki steers" (*Völuspa* 50, 51). It would not, perhaps, be overstraining the point to suggest that this is a reminiscence of early warfare between the Scandinavians and eastern nations, either Lapps and Finns or Slavonic tribes.

Thor is the God of natural force, the son of Earth. Two of the episodical poems deal with his contests with the giants. *Thrymskvida*, the story of how Thor won back his hammer, Mjöllni, from the giant Thrym, is the finest and one of the oldest

of the mythological poems; a translation is given in the appendix, as an example of Eddic poetry at its best. Loki appears as the willing helper of the Gods, and Thor's companion. The Thunderer's journey with Tyr in quest of a cauldron is related with much humour in *Hymiskvida:* Hymi's beautiful wife, who helps her guests to outwit her husband, is a figure familiar in fairy-tales as the Ogre's wife.

The chief God of the Scandinavians is, it must be confessed, an unsympathetic character. He is the head of the Valhalla system; he is Val-father (Father of the Slain), and the Valkyries are his "Wishmaidens," as the Einherjar are his "Wish-sons." He naturally takes a special interest in mortal heroes, from whom come the chosen hosts of Valhalla. But, in spite of the splendour of his surroundings, he is wanting in dignity. The chief of the Gods has neither the might and unthinking valour of Thor, nor the self-sacrificing courage of Tyr. He is a God who practises magic, and it is as Father of Spells that he is powerful. He is the wisest of the Gods in the sense that he remembers most about the past and foresees most about the future; yet he is powerless in difficulty without the craft of Loki and the hammer of Thor. He always wanders in disguise, and the stories told of him are chiefly love-adventures; this is true of all the deeds he mentions in *Harbardsljod*, and also of

the two interpolations in *Havamal*, though one of the two had an object, the stealing of the mead of inspiration from the giant Suptung, whose daughter Gunnlöd guarded it.

*Völuspa* makes him one of three creative deities, the other two being Lodur (probably Loki) and Hoeni, of whom nothing else is known except the story that he was given as hostage to the Vanir in exchange for Njörd. The same three Gods (Odin, Loki and Hoeni) are connected with the legend of the Nibelung treasure; and it was another adventure of theirs, according to Snorri, which led to the loss of Idunn.

Of the other Gods, Bragi is a later development; his name means simply king or chief, and his attributes, as God of eloquence and poetry, are apparently borrowed from Odin. Heimdal, the watchman and "far-seeing like the Vanir," who keeps guard on the rainbow bridge Bifröst, is represented in the curious poem *Rigsthula* as founder of the different social orders. He wandered over the world under the name of Rig, and from his first journey sprang the race of thralls, swarthy, crooked and broad-backed, who busied themselves with fencing land and tending goats and swine; from his second, the churls, fine and ruddy, who broke oxen, built houses and ploughed the land; from his third, the earls, yellow-haired, rosy, and keen-eyed, who broke horses and strung bows,

rode, swam, and hurled spears; and the youngest of the earls' race was Konung the king, who knew all mysteries, understood the speech of birds, could quench fire and heal wounds. Heimdal is said to be the son of nine mothers, and to have fought with Loki for Freyja's Brising-necklace. His horn is hidden under Yggdrasil, to be brought out at Ragnarök, when he will blow a warning blast. His origin is obscure. Still less is known of Vidar and Vali, two sons of Odin, one of whom is to avenge Baldr's death, the other to slay the wolf after it has swallowed up the chief God at Ragnarök. Thor's stepson Ullr (Glory) is probably, like his sons Modi and Magni (Wrath and Strength), a mere epithet.

Frigg, Odin's wife and the chief Goddess, daughter of Earth, is not very distinctly characterised, and is often confused with Freyja. Gefion should be the sea-goddess, since that seems to be the meaning of her name, but her functions are apparently usurped by the Wane Njörd; according to Snorri, she is the patron of those who die unwedded.

**Baldr.**—The story of Baldr is the most debated point in the Edda. The chief theories advanced are: (1) That it is the oldest part of Norse mythology, and of ritual origin; (2) that Baldr is really a hero transformed into a God; (3) that the legend

is a solar myth with or without Christian colouring; (4) that it is entirely borrowed from Mediæval Greek and Christian sources. This last theory is too ingenious to be credible; and with regard to the third, there is nothing essentially Christian in the chief features of the legend, while the solar idea leaves too much unexplained. The references to the myth in the Elder Edda are:

(1) *Vegtamskvida* (about 900 A.D.). Odin questions the Sibyl as to the meaning of Baldr's dreams:

> ODIN. "For whom are the benches (in hell) strewn with rings, the halls fairly adorned with gold?"
>
> SIBYL. "Here the mead, clear drink, stands brewed for Baldr; the shields are spread. The sons of the Aesir are too merry."
>
> ODIN. "Who will be Baldr's slayer and rob Odin's son of life?"
>
> SIBYL. "Höd bears thither the high branch of fame: he will be Baldr's slayer and rob Odin's son of life."
>
> ODIN. "Who will avenge the deed on Höd and bring Baldr's slayer to the funeral pyre?"
>
> SIBYL. "Rind bears a son, Vali, in the halls of the west. He shall not wash his hands nor comb his hair till he bears Baldr's foe to the pyre."

(2) In *Lokasenna* Frigg says: "If I had a son like Baldr here in Oegi's halls, thou shouldst not pass out from the sons of the Aesir, but be slain here in thy anger"; to which Loki replies, "Wilt thou that I speak more ill words, Frigg? I am

the cause that thou wilt never more see Baldr ride into the hall."

(3) In *Vafthrudnismal* the only reference is Odin's question, "What said Odin in his son's ear when he mounted the pyre?"

(4) In *Völuspa* the Sibyl prophesies, "I saw doom threatening Baldr, the bleeding victim, the son of Odin. Grown high above the meadows stood the mistletoe, slender and fair. From this stem, which looked so slender, grew a fatal and dangerous shaft. Höd shot it, and Frigg wept in Fenhall over Valhall's woe." The following lines, on the chaining of Loki, suggest his complicity.

(5) *Hyndluljod* has one reference: "There were eleven Aesir by number when Baldr went down into the howe. Vali was his avenger and slew his brother's slayer."

Besides these there is a fragment quoted by Snorri: "Thökk will weep dry tears at Baldr's funeral pyre. I had no good of the old man's son alive or dead; let Hel keep what she has." *Grimnismal* assigns a hall to Baldr among the Gods.

There are, in addition, two prose versions of the story by later writers: the Icelandic version of Snorri (1178–1241) with all the details familiar to every one; and the Latin one of the Dane Saxo Grammaticus (about thirty years earlier), which makes Baldr and Höd heroes instead of Gods, and

completely alters the character of the legend by making a rivalry for Nanna's favour the centre of the plot and cause of the catastrophe. On the Eddic version and on Saxo's depend the theories of Golther, Detter, Niedner and other German scholars on the one hand, and Dr. Frazer on the other.

It has often been pointed out that there is no trace of Baldr-worship in other Germanic nations, nor in any of the Icelandic sagas except the late Frithjofssaga. This, however, is true of other Gods, notably of Tyr, who is without question one of the oldest. The only deities named with any suggestion of sacrifice or worship in the Icelandic sagas proper are Odin, Thor, Frey, Njörd, Frigg and Freyja. The process of choice is as arbitrary in mythology as in other sciences. Again, it is more likely that the original version of the legend should have survived in Iceland than in Denmark, which, being on the mainland, was earlier subject to Christian and Romantic influences; and that a heathen God should, in the two or three centuries following the establishment of Christianity in the North, be turned into a mortal hero, than that the reverse process should have acted at a sufficiently late date to permit of both versions existing side by side in the thirteenth century. A similar gradual elimination of the supernatural may be found in the history of the Volsung myth. Snorri's version is merely an amplification of that in the Elder

Edda, which, scanty as its account of Baldr is, leaves no doubt as to his divinity.

The outline gathered from the poems is as follows: Baldr, Odin's son, is killed by his brother Höd through a mistletoe spray; Loki is in some way concerned in his death, which is an overwhelming misfortune to the Gods; but it is on Höd that his death is avenged. He is burnt on a pyre (Snorri says on his ship, a feature which must come from the Viking age; *Hyndluljod* substitutes howe-burial). He will be absent from the great fight at Ragnarök, but *Völuspa* adds that he will return afterwards. Nanna has nothing to do with the story. The connexion with the hierarchy of the Aesir seems external only, since Baldr has no apparent relation to the great catastrophe as have Odin, Thor, Frey, Tyr and Loki; this, then, would point to the independence of his myth.

The genuineness of the myth seems to depend on whether the mistletoe is an original feature of it or not, and on this point there can be little real doubt. The German theory that Baldr could only be killed by his own sword, which was therefore disguised by enchantment and used against him, and that the Icelandic writers misunderstood this to mean a mistletoe sprig, is far-fetched and romantic, and crumbles at a touch. For if, as it is claimed, the Icelanders had no mistletoe, why should they introduce it into a story to which it did not belong?

They might preserve it by tradition, but they would hardly invent it. Granting this, the mistletoe becomes the central point of the legend. The older mythologists, who only saw in it a sun-myth, overlooked the fact that since any weapon would have done to kill the God with, the mistletoe must have some special significance; and if it is a genuine part of the story, as we have no reason to doubt, it will be hard to overturn Dr. Frazer's theory that the Baldr-myth is a relic of tree-worship and the ritual sacrifice of the God, Baldr being a tree-spirit whose soul is contained in the mistletoe.

The contradictions in the story, especially as told by Snorri (such as the confusion between the parts played by Höd and Loki, and the unsuspicious attitude of the Gods as Loki directs Höd's aim) are sometimes urged against its genuineness. They are rather proofs of antiquity. Apparent contradictions whose explanation is forgotten often survive in tradition; the inventor of a new story takes care to make it consistent. It is probable, however, that there were originally only two actors in the episode, the victim and the slayer, and that Loki's part is later than Höd's, for he really belongs to the Valhall and Ragnarök myth, and was only introduced here as a link. The incident of the oath extracted from everything on earth to protect Baldr, which occurs in Snorri and in a paper MS. of *Baldr's Dreams*, was probably invented to

explain the choice of weapon, which would certainly need explanation to an Icelandic audience. If Dr. Frazer's theory be right, Vali, who slew the slayer, must also have been an original figure in the legend. His antiquity is supported by the fact that he plays the part of avenger in the poems; while in Snorri, where he is mentioned as a God, his absence from the account of Baldr's death is only a part of that literary development by which real responsibility for the murder was transferred from Höd to Loki.

Snorri gives Baldr a son, Forseti (Judge), who is also named as a God in *Grimnismal*. He must have grown out of an epithet of Baldr's, of whom Snorri says that "no one can resist his sentence"; the sacred tree would naturally be the seat of judgment.

**The Wanes.**—Three of the Norse divinities, Njörd and his son and daughter, are not Aesir by descent. The following account is given of their presence in Asgard:

(1) In *Vafthrudnismal*, Odin asks:

"Whence came Njörd among the sons of the Aesir? for he was not born of the Aesir."

VAFTHRUDNI. "In Vanaheim wise powers ordained and gave him for a hostage to the Gods; at the doom of the world he shall come back, home to the wise Wanes."

(2) There is an allusion in *Völuspa* to the war which caused the giving of hostages:

> "Odin shot into the host: this was the first war in the world. Broken was the wall of the citadel of the Aesir, so that the Wanes could tread the fields of war."

(3) Loki taunts Njörd with his position, in *Lokasenna*:

> "Thou wast sent from the east as a hostage to the Gods. . . ."
>
> NJÖRD. "This is my comfort, though I was sent from far as a hostage to the Gods, yet I have a son whom no one hates, and he is thought the best of the Aesir."
>
> LOKI. "Stay, Njörd, restrain thy pride; I will hide it no longer: thy son is thine own sister's son, and that is no worse than one would expect."
>
> TYR. "Frey is the best of all the bold riders of Asgard."

There is little doubt that Njörd was once a God of higher importance than he is in the Edda, where he is overshadowed by his son. Grimm's suggestion that he and the goddess Nerthus, mentioned by Tacitus, were brother and sister, is supported by the line in *Lokasenna;* it is an isolated reference, and the Goddess has left no other traces in Scandinavian mythology. They were the deities, probably agricultural, of an earlier age, whose adoption by the later Northmen was explained by the story of the compact between Aesir and Vanir. Then

their places were usurped by Frey and Freyja, who were possibly created out of epithets originally applied to the older pair; Njörd was retained with lessened importance, Nerthus passed out altogether. The Edda gives Njörd a giant-bride, Skadi, who was admitted among the Gods in atonement for the slaying of her father Thiazi; she is little more than a name. Frey and Freyja have other marks of agricultural deities, besides their relationship. Nothing is said about Frey's changing shape, but Freyja possesses a hawk-dress which Loki borrows when he wishes to change his form; and, according to Snorri, Frey was sacrificed to for the crops. Njörd has an epithet, "the wealthy," which may have survived from his earlier connexion with the soil. In that case, it would explain why, in Snorri and elsewhere, he is God of the sea and ships, once the province of the ocean-goddess Gefion; the transference is a natural one to an age whose wealth came from the sea.

In spite of their origin, Frey and Freyja become to all intents and purposes Aesir. Frey is to be one of the chief combatants at Ragnarök, with the fire-giant Surt for his antagonist, and a story is told to explain his defeat: he fell in love with Gerd, a giant-maid, and sacrificed his sword to get her; hence he is weaponless at the last fight. Loki alludes to this episode in *Lokasenna:* "With gold didst thou buy Gymi's daughter, and gavest

thy sword for her; but when Muspell's sons ride over Myrkwood, thou shalt not know with what to fight, unhappy one." The story is told in full in *Skirnisför*.

Freyja is called by Snorri "the chief Goddess after Frigg," and the two are sometimes confused. Like her father and brother, she comes into connexion with the giants; she is the beautiful Goddess, and coveted by them. *Völuspa* says that the Gods went into consultation to discuss "who had given the bride of Od (*i.e.*, Freyja) to the giant race"; *Thrymskvida* relates how the giant Thrym bargained for Freyja as the ransom for Thor's hammer, which he had hidden, and how Loki and Thor outwitted him; and Snorri says the giants bargained for her as the price for building Valhalla, but were outwitted. Sir G. W. Dasent notices in the folk-tales the eagerness of trolls and giants to learn the details of the agricultural processes, and this is probably the clue to the desire of the Frost-Giants in the Edda for the possession of Freyja. Idunn, the wife of Bragi, and a purely Norse creation, seems to be a double of Freyja; she, too, according to Snorri, is carried away by the giants and rescued by Loki. The golden apples which she is to keep till Ragnarök remind us of those which Frey offered to Gerd; and the gift of eternal youth, of which they are the symbols, would be appropriate enough to Freyja as an agricultural deity.

The great necklace Brising, stolen by Loki and won back in fight by Heimdal (according to the tenth-century Skalds Thjodulf and Ulf Uggason), is Freyja's property. On this ground, she has been identified with the heroine of *Svipdag and Menglad*, a poem undoubtedly old, though it has only come down in paper MSS. It is in two parts, the first telling how Svipdag aroused the Sibyl Groa, his mother, to give him spells to guard him on his journey; the second describing his crossing the wall of fire which surrounded his fated bride Menglad. If Menglad is really Freyja, the "Necklace-glad," it is a curious coincidence that one poem connects the waverlowe, or ring of fire, with Frey also; for his bride Gerd is protected in the same way, though his servant Skirni goes through it in his place:

> SKIRNI. "Give me the horse that will bear me through the dark magic waverlowe, and the sword that fights of itself against the giant-race."
>
> FREY. "I give thee the horse that will bear thee through the dark magic waverlowe, and the sword that will fight of itself if he is bold who bears it." (*Skirnisför.*)

The connexion of both with the Midsummer fires, originally part of an agricultural ritual, can hardly be doubted.

**Loki**, or Lopt, is a strange figure. He is admitted among the Aesir, though not one of them

by birth, and his whole relation to them points to his being an older elemental God. He is in alliance with them against the giants; he and Odin have sworn blood-brothership, according to *Lokasenna*, and he helps Thor to recover his hammer that Asgard may be defended against the giants. On the other hand, while in present alliance with the Gods, he is chief agent in their future destruction, and this they know. In Snorri, he is a mischievous spirit of the fairy-tale kind, exercising his ingenuity alternately in getting the Gods into difficulties, and in getting them out again. So he betrays Idunn to the giants, and delivers her; he makes the bargain by which Freyja is promised to the giant-builders of Valhalla, and invents the trick by which they are cheated of their prize; by killing the otter he endangers his own head, Odin's and Hoeni's, and he obtains the gold which buys their atonement. Hence, in the systematising of the Viking religion, the responsibility for Baldr's death also was transferred to him. At the coming of the fire-giants at Ragnarök, he is to steer the ship in which Muspell's sons sail (*Völuspa*), further evidence of his identity as a fire-spirit. Like his son the Wolf, he is chained by the Gods; the episode is related in a prose-piece affixed to *Lokasenna*:

> "After that Loki hid himself in Franangr's Foss, in the form of a salmon. There the Aesir caught him. He was bound with the guts of his son Nari, but his

son Narfi was changed into a wolf. Skadi took a poisonous snake and fastened it up over Loki's face, and the poison dropped down. Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat there and held a cup under the poison. But when it was full she poured the poison away, and meanwhile poison dropped on Loki, and he struggled so hard that all the earth shook; those are called earthquakes now."

*Völuspa* inserts lines corresponding to this passage after the Baldr episode, and Snorri makes it a consequence of Loki's share in that event.

He is more especially agent of the doom through his children: at Ragnarök, Fenri the Wolf, bound long before by Tyr's help, will be freed, and swallow the sun (*Vafthrudnismal*) and Odin (*Vafthrudnismal* and *Völuspa*); and Jörmungandr, the Giant-Snake, will rise from the sea where he lies curled round the world, to slay and be slain by Thor. The dragon's writhing in the waves is one of the tokens to herald Ragnarök, and his battle with Thor is the fiercest combat of that day. Only *Völuspa* of our poems gives any account of it: "Then comes the glorious son of Hlodyn, Odin's son goes to meet the serpent; Midgard's guardian slays him in his rage, but scarcely can Earth's son reel back nine feet from the dragon."

When Thor goes fishing with the giant Hymi, he terrifies his companion by dragging the snake's head out of the sea, but he does not slay it; it must wait there till Ragnarök:

"The protector of men, the only slayer of the Serpent, baited his hook with the ox's head. The God-hated one who girds all lands from below swallowed the bait. Doughtily pulled mighty Thor the poison-streaked serpent up to the side; he struck down with his hammer the hideous head of the wolf's companion. The monster roared, the wilderness resounded, the old earth shuddered all through. The fish sank back into the sea. Gloomy was the giant when they rowed back, so that he spoke not a word."

There is nothing to suggest that Jörmungandr, to whom the word World-Snake (Midgardsorm) always refers in the Edda, is the same as Nidhögg, the serpent that gnaws at Yggdrasil's roots; but both are relics of Snake-worship.

**The World-Ash,** generally called Yggdrasil's Ash, is one of the most interesting survivals of tree-worship. It is described by the Sibyl in *Völuspa:* "I know an ash called Yggdrasil, a high tree sprinkled with white moisture (thence come the dews that fall in the dales): it stands ever-green by Urd's spring. Thence come three maids, all-knowing, from the hall that stands under the tree"; and as a sign of the approaching doom she says: "Yggdrasil's ash trembles as it stands; the old tree groans." *Grimnismal* says that the Gods go every day to hold judgment by the ash, and describes it further:

"Three roots lie three ways under Yggdrasil's ash: Hel dwells under one, the frost-giants under the second,

mortal men under the third. The squirrel is called Ratatosk who shall run over Yggdrasil's ash; he shall carry down the eagle's words, and tell them to Nidhögg below. There are four harts, with necks thrown back, who gnaw off the shoots. . . . More serpents lie under Yggdrasil's ash than any one knows. Ofni and Svafni I know will ever gnaw at the tree's twigs. Yggdrasil's ash suffers more hardships than men know: the hart bites above, the side decays, and Nidhögg gnaws below. . . . Yggdrasil's ash is the best of trees."

The snake and the tree are familiar in other mythologies, though in most other cases the snake is the protector, while here he is the destroyer. Both Nidhögg and Jörmungandr are examples of the destroying dragon rather than the treasure-guardian. The Ash is the oracle: the judgment-place of the Gods, the dwelling of the Fates, the source of the spring of knowledge.

**Ragnarök.**—The Twilight of the Gods (or Doom of the Gods) is the central point of the Viking religion. The Regin (of which *Ragna* is genitive plural) are the ruling powers, often called Ginnregin (the great Gods), Uppregin (the high Gods), Thrymregin (the warrior Gods). The word is commonly used of the Aesir in *Völuspa;* in *Alvissmal* the Regin seem to be distinguished from both Aesir and Vanir. The whole story of the Aesir is overshadowed by knowledge of this coming doom, the time when they shall meet foes more terrible than the giants,

and fall before them; their constant effort is to learn what will happen then, and to gather their forces together to meet it. The coming Ragnarök is the reason for the existence of Valhalla with its hosts of slain warriors; and of all the Gods, Odin, Thor, Tyr and Loki are most closely connected with it. Two poems of the verse Edda describe it:

(1) *Vafthrudnismal:*

V. "What is the plain called where Surt and the blessed Gods shall meet in battle?"

O. "Vigrid is the name of the place where Surt and the blessed Gods shall meet in battle. It is a hundred miles every way; it is their destined battle-field."

. . . . . .

O. "Whence shall the sun come on the smooth heaven when Fenri has destroyed this one?"

V. "Before Fenri destroy her, the elf-beam shall bear a daughter: that maid shall ride along her mother's paths, when the Gods perish."

O. "Which of the Aesir shall rule over the realms of the Gods, when Surt's fire is quenched?"

V. "Vidar and Vali shall dwell in the sanctuary of the Gods when Surt's fire is quenched. Modi and Magni shall have Mjöllni at the end of Vingni's (*i.e.*, Thor's) combat."

O. "What shall be Odin's end, when the Gods perish?"

V. "The Wolf will swallow the father of men; Vidar will avenge it. He will cleave the Wolf's cold jaws in the battle."

(2) *Völuspa:*

"A hag sits eastward in Ironwood and rears Fenri's children; one of them all, in troll's shape, shall be the

sun's destroyer. He shall feed on the lives of death-doomed men; with red blood he shall redden the seat of the Gods. The sunshine shall grow black, all winds will be unfriendly in the after-summers. . . . I see further in the future the great Ragnarök of the Gods of Victory. . . . Heimdal blows loudly, the horn is on high; Yggdrasil's ash trembles as it stands, the old tree groans."

The following lines tell of the fire-giants and the various combats, and the last section of the poem deals with a new world when Baldr, Höd and Hoeni are to come back to the dwelling-place of the Gods.

The whole points to a belief in the early destruction of the world and the passing away of the old order of things. Whether the new world which *Vafthrudnismal* and *Völuspa* both prophesy belongs to the original idea or not is a disputed point. Probably it does not; at all events, none of the old Aesir, according to the poems, are to survive, for Modi and Magni are not really Gods at all, Baldr, Höd and Vali belong to another myth, Hoeni had passed out of the hierarchy by his exchange with Njörd, and Vidar's origin is obscure.

**The Einherjar,** the great champions or chosen warriors, are intimately connected with Ragnarök. All warriors who fall in battle are taken to Odin's hall of the slain, Valhalla. According to *Grimnismal*, he "chooses every day men dead by the

sword"; his Valkyries ride to battle to give the victory and bring in the fallen. Hence Odin is the giver of victory. Loki in *Lokasenna* taunts him with giving victory to the wrong side: "Thou hast never known how to decide the battle among men. Thou hast often given victory to those to whom thou shouldst not give it, to the more cowardly"; this, no doubt, was in order to secure the best fighters for Valhalla. That the defeated side sometimes consoled themselves with this explanation of a notable warrior's fall is proved by the tenth-century dirge on Eirik Bloodaxe, where Sigmund the Volsung asks in Valhalla: "Why didst thou take the victory from him, if thou thoughtest him brave?" and Odin replies: "Because it is uncertain when the grey Wolf will come to the seat of the Gods." There are similar lines in Eyvind's dirge on Hakon the Good. In this way a host was collected ready for Ragnarök: for *Grimnismal* says: "There are five hundred doors and eighty in Valhalla; eight hundred Einherjar will go out from each door, when they go to fight the wolf." Meanwhile they fight and feast: "All the Einherjar in Odin's courts fight every day: they choose the slain and ride from the battle, and sit then in peace together" (*Vafthrudnismal*), and the Valkyries bear ale to them (*Grimnismal*).

It is often too hastily assumed that the Norse Ragnarök with the dependant Valhalla system are

in great part the outcome of Christian influence: of an imitation of the Christian Judgment Day and the Christian heaven respectively. Owing to the lateness of our material, it is, of course, impossible to decide how old the beliefs may be, but it is likely that the Valhalla idea only took form at the systematising of the mythology in the Viking age. The belief in another world for the dead is, however, by no means exclusively Christian, and a reference in *Grimnismal* suggests the older system out of which, under the influence of the Ragnarök idea, Valhalla was developed. The lines, "The ninth hall is Folkvang, where Freyja rules the ordering of seats in the hall; half the slain she chooses every day, Odin has the other half," are an evident survival of a belief that all the dead went to live with the Gods, Odin having the men, and Freyja (or more probably Frigg) the women; the idea being here confused with the later system, under which only those who fell in battle were chosen by the Gods. Christian colouring appears in the last lines of *Völuspa* and in Snorri, where men are divided into the "good and moral," who go after death to a hall of red gold, and the "perjurers and murderers," who are sent to a hall of snakes.

For Ragnarök also a heathen origin is at least as probable as a Christian one. I would suggest as a possibility that the expectation of the Twilight of

the Gods may have grown out of some ritual connected with the eclipse, such as is frequent among heathen races. Such ceremonies are a tacit acknowledgment of a doubt, and if they ever existed among the Scandinavians, the possibility, ever present to the savage mind, of a time when his efforts to help the light might be fruitless, and the darkness prove the stronger, would be the germ of his more civilised descendant's belief in Ragnarök.

By turning to the surviving poems of the Skalds, whose dates can be approximately reckoned from the sagas, we can fix an inferior limit for certain of the legends given above, placing them definitely in the heathen time. Reference has already been made to the corroboration of the Valhalla belief supplied by the elegies on Eirik Bloodaxe and Hakon the Good. In the former (which is anonymous, but must have been written soon after 950, since it was composed, on Eirik's death, by his wife's orders), Odin commands the Einherjar and Valkyries to prepare for the reception of the slain Eirik and his host, since no one knows how soon the Gods will need to gather their forces together for the great contest. Eyvind's dirge on Hakon (who fell in 970) is an imitation of this: Odin sends two Valkyries to choose a king to enter his service in Valhalla; they find Hakon on the battle-field, and he is slain with many of his followers. Great

preparation is made in Valhalla for his reception, and the poet ends by congratulating Hakon (who, though a Christian, having been educated in England, had not interfered with the heathen altars and sacrifices) on the toleration which has secured him such a welcome. A still earlier poet, Hornklofi, writing during the reign of Harald Fairhair (who died in 933), alludes to the slain as the property of "the one-eyed husband of Frigg."

Several Skalds mention legends of Thor: his fishing for the World-Snake is told by Bragi (who from his place in genealogies must have written before 900), and by Ulf Uggason and Eystein Valdason, both in the second half of the tenth century; and Thjodulf and Eilif (the former about 960, the latter a little later) tell tales of his fights with the giants. Turning to the other Gods, Egil Skallagrimsson (about 970) names Frey and Njörd as the givers of wealth; Bragi tells the story of Gefion's dragging the island of Zealand out of Lake Wener into the sea; and Ulf Uggason speaks of Heimdal's wrestling with Loki.

The legend of Idunn is told by Thjodulf much as Snorri tells it: Odin, Hoeni and Loki, while on a journey, kill and roast an ox. The giant Thiazi swoops down in eagle's shape and demands a share; Loki strikes the eagle, who flies off with him, releasing him only on condition that he will betray to the giants Idunn, "the care-healing maid who

understands the renewal of youth." He does so, and the Gods, who grow old and withered for want of her apples, force him to go and bring her back to Asgard.

The poet of *Eiriksmal*, quoted above, alludes to the Baldr myth: Bragi, hearing the approach of Eirik and his host, asks "What is that thundering and tramping, as if Baldr were coming back to Odin's hall?" The funeral pyre of Baldr is described by Ulf Uggason: he is burnt on his ship, which is launched by a giantess, in the presence of Frey, Heimdal, Odin and the Valkyries.

Though heathen writers outside of Scandinavia are lacking, references to Germanic heathendom fortunately survive in several Continental Christian historians of earlier date than any of our Scandinavian sources. The evidence of these, though scanty, is corroborative, and the allusions are in striking agreement with the Edda stories in tone and character.

Odin (Wodanus) is always identified by these writers with the Roman Mercurius (whom Tacitus named as the chief German God). This identification occurs in the eighth-century Paulus Diaconus, and in Jonas of Bobbio (first half of the seventh century), and probably rests on Odin's character as a wandering God (Mercury being διάκτορος), his disguises, and his patronage of poetry and eloquence (as Mercury is λόγιος). Odin

is not himself in general the conductor of dead souls (*ψυχοπομπός*), like the Roman God, his attendant Valkyries performing the office for him. The equation is only comprehensible on the presumption of the independence of Germanic mythology, and cannot be explained by transmission. For if Odin were in any degree an imitation of the Roman deity, other notable attributes of the latter would have been assigned to him: whereas in the Edda the thieving God (*κλέπτης*) is not Odin but Loki, and the founder of civilisation is Heimdal.

The legend of the origin of the Lombards given by Paulus Diaconus illustrates the relations of Odin and Frigg. The Vandals asked Wodan (Odin) to grant them victory over the Vinili; the latter made a similar prayer to Frea (Frigg), the wife of Wodan. She advised them to make their wives tie their hair round their faces like beards, and go with them to meet Wodan in the morning. They did so, and Wodan exclaimed, "Who are these *Long-beards?*" Then Frea said that having given the Vinili a name, he must give them the victory (as Helgi in the Edda claims a gift from Svava when she names him). As in *Grimnismal*, Odin and Frigg are represented as supporting rival claims, and Frigg gains the day for her favourites by superior cunning. This legend also shows Odin as the giver of victory.

Few heathen legends are told however by these

early Christian writers, and the Gods are seldom called by their German names. An exception is the Frisian Fosite mentioned by Alcuin (who died 804) and by later writers; he is to be identified with the Norse Forseti, the son of (probably at first an epithet of) Baldr, but no legend of him is told. It is disappointing that these writers should have said so little of any God except the chief one. A very characteristic touch survives in Gregory of Tours (died 594), when the Frank Chlodvig tells his Christian wife that the Christian God "cannot be proved to be of the race of the Gods," an idea entirely in keeping with the Eddic hierarchy. Before leaving the Continental historians, reference may be made to the abundant evidence of Germanic tree-worship to be gathered from them. The holy oak mentioned by Wilibald (before 786), the sacred pear-tree of Constantius (473), with numerous others, supply parallels to the World-Ash which is so important a feature of Norse mythology.

A study of this subject would be incomplete without some reference to the mythology of Saxo Grammaticus. His testimony on the old religion is unwilling, and his effort to discredit it very evident. The bitterness of his attack on Frigg especially suggests that she was, among the Northmen, a formidable rival to the Virgin. When he repeats a legend of the Gods, he transforms them into

mortal heroes, and when, as often happens, he refers to them accidentally as Gods, he invariably hastens to protest that he does so only because it had been the custom. He describes Thor and Odin as men versed in sorcery who claimed the rank of Gods; and in another passage he speaks of the latter as a king who had his seat at Upsala, and who was falsely credited with divinity throughout Europe. His description of Odin agrees with that in the Edda: an old man of great stature and mighty in battle, one-eyed, wearing a great cloak, and constantly wandering about in disguise. The story which Saxo tells of his driving into battle with Harald War-tooth, disguised as the latter's charioteer Brun, and turning the fight against him by revealing to his enemy Ring the order of battle which he had invented for Harald's advantage, is in thorough agreement with the traditional character of the God who betrayed Sigmund the Volsung and Helgi Hundingsbane. Saxo's version of the Baldr story has been mentioned already. Baldr's transformation into a hero (who could only be slain by a sword in the keeping of a wood-satyr) is almost complete. But Odin and Thor and all the Gods fight for him against his rival Hother, "so that it might be called a battle of Gods against men"; and Nanna's excuse to Baldr that "a God could not wed with a mortal," preserves a trace of his origin. The chained Loki appears in Saxo as

Utgarda-Loki, lying bound in a cavern of snakes, and worshipped as a God by the Danish king Gorm Haraldsson. Dr. Rydberg sees the Freyja myth in Saxo's story of Syritha, who was carried away by the giants and delivered by her lover Othar (the Od of the Edda): an example, like *Svipdag and Menglad*, of the complete transformation of a divine into an heroic myth. In almost all cases Saxo vulgarises the stories in the telling, a common result when a mythical tale is retold by a Christian writer, though it is still more conspicuous in his versions of the heroic legends.

# APPENDIX

## THRYMSKVIDA.

1. THEN Wing-Thor was angry when he awoke, and missed his hammer. He shook his beard, he tossed his hair, the son of Earth groped about for it.

2. And first of all he spoke these words: "Hear now, Loki, what I tell thee, a thing that no one in earth or heaven above has heard: the Asa has been robbed of his hammer!"

3. They went to the dwelling of fair Freyja, and these words he spoke first of all: "Wilt thou lend me, Freyja, thy feather dress, to see if I can find my hammer?"

4. FREYJA. "I would give it thee, though it were of gold; I would grant it, though it were of silver."

5. Then Loki flew, the feather-coat rustled, until he came out of Asgard and into Jötunheim.

6. Thrym, lord of the Giants, sat on a howe; he twisted golden bands for his greyhounds and trimmed his horses' manes.

7. THRYM. "How is it with the Aesir? How is it with the Elves? Why art thou come alone into Jötunheim?"

LOKI. "It is ill with the Aesir, it is ill with the Elves; hast thou hidden the Thunderer's hammer?"

8. THRYM. "I have hidden the Thunderer's hammer eight miles below the earth. No man shall bring it back, unless he bring me Freyja to wife."

9. Then Loki flew, the feather-coat rustled, until he came out of Jötunheim and into Asgard. Thor met

him in the middle of the court, and these words he spoke first:

10. "Hast thou news in proportion to thy toil? Tell me from on high thy distant tidings, for a sitting man often breaks down in his story, and he who lies down falls into falsehood."

11. LOKI. "I bring news for my toil: Thrym, lord of the Giants, has thy hammer; no man shall bring it back, unless he take him Freyja as a bride."

12. They went to see fair Freyja, spoke to her first of all these words: "Bind on the bridal veil, Freyja, we two must drive to Jötunheim."

13. Angry then was Freyja; she panted, so that all the hall of the Aesir trembled, and the great Brising necklace fell: "Eager indeed for marriage wouldst thou think me, if I should drive with thee to Jötunheim."

14. Then all the Aesir went into council, and all the Asynjor to consultation, and the mighty Gods discussed how they should recover the Thunderer's hammer.

15. Then spoke Heimdal, whitest of the Aesir; he could see into the future like the Vanir: "Let us bind on Thor the bridal veil; let him have the great necklace Brising.

16. "Let the keys jingle, and let women's weeds fall about his knees; let us put broad stones on his breast, and a hood dexterously on his head."

17. Then spoke Thor, the mighty Asa: "Vile would the Aesir call me, if I let the bridal veil be bound on me."

18. Then spoke Loki, Laufey's son: "Speak not such words, Thor! soon will the Giants dwell in Asgard, unless thou bring home thy hammer."

19. Then they bound on Thor the bridal veil, and the great necklace Brising; they let the keys jingle and women's weeds fall about his knees, and they put broad

stones on his breast, and the hood dexterously on his head.

20. Then spoke Loki, Laufey's son: "I also will go with thee as thy maiden; we two will drive together to Jötunheim."

21. Then the goats were driven out, urged forward in their harness; well must they run. Rocks were riven, the earth burned in flame: Odin's son was driving into Jötunheim.

22. Then spoke Thrym, lord of the Giants: "Stand up, giants, and strew the benches! They are bringing me now Freyja my bride, Njörd's daughter from Noatun.

23. "Gold-horned kine run in the court, oxen all-black, the giant's delight. I have many treasures, I have many jewels, Freyja only is lacking."

24. The guests assembled early in the evening, and ale was carried to the Giants. One ox did Sif's husband eat, and eight salmon, and all the dishes prepared for the women; three casks of mead he drank.

25. Then spoke Thrym, lord of the Giants: "Who ever saw a bride eat so eagerly? I never saw a bride make such a hearty meal, nor a maid drink so deep of mead."

26. The prudent handmaid sat near, and she found answer to the Giant's words: "Eight nights has Freyja eaten nothing, so eager was she to be in Jötunheim."

27. He looked under the veil, he longed to kiss the bride, but he started back the length of the hall: "Why are Freyja's eyes so terrible? Fire seems to burn from her eyes."

28. The prudent handmaid sat near, and she found answer to the Giant's speech: "Eight nights has Freyja had no sleep, so eager was she to be in Jötunheim."

29. In came the Giants' wretched sister, she dared to ask for a bridal gift: "Take from thine arms the red rings, if thou wouldst gain my love, my love and all my favour."

30. Then spoke Thrym, lord of the Giants: "Bring the hammer to hallow the bride. Lay Mjöllni on the maiden's knee, hallow us two in wedlock."

31. The Thunderer's heart laughed in his breast, when the bold of soul felt the hammer. Thrym killed he first, the lord of the Giants, and all the race of the Giants he struck.

32. He slew the Giants' aged sister, who had asked him for a bridal gift. She got a blow instead of shillings, and a stroke of the hammer for abundance of rings. So Odin's son got back his hammer.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## I. Study in the Original.

(1) *Poetic Edda.*—The classic edition, and on the whole the best, is Professor Bugge's (Christiania, 1867); the smaller editions of Hildebrand (*Die Lieder der Aelteren Edda*, Paderborn, 1876), and Finnur Jónsson (*Eddalieder*, Halle, 1888–90) are also good; the latter is in two parts, *Göttersage* and *Heldensage*. The poems may also be found in the first volume of Vigfusson and Powell's *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (Oxford, 1883), accompanied by translations; but in many cases they are cut up and rearranged, and they suffer metrically from the system adopted of printing two short lines as one long one, with no dividing point. There is an excellent palæographic edition of the *Codex Regius of the Elder Edda*, by Wimmer and Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1891), with photographic reproductions interleaved with a literal transcription.

(2) *Snorra Edda.*—The most recent edition of the whole is Dr. Finnur Jónsson's (Copenhagen, 1875). There is a useful edition of the mythological portions (*i.e.*, *Gylfaginning*, *Bragarœdur*, and the narrative parts of *Skaldskaparmal*) by Ernst Wilken (*Die Prosäische Edda*, Paderborn, 1878).

(3) *Dictionaries and Grammars.*—For the study of the Poetic Edda, Gering's *Glossar zu den Liedern der Edda* (Paderborn, 1896) will be found most useful; it is com-

plete and trustworthy, and in small compass. A similar service has been performed for *Snorra Edda* in Wilken's *Glossar* (Paderborn, 1883), which forms a second volume to his edition, mentioned above. Both are, of course, in German. The only English dictionary is the lexicon of Cleasby and Vigfusson (Oxford).

Of Grammars, the best are German; those of Noreen (*Altnordische Grammatik*, Halle, 1892), of which there is an abbreviated edition, and Kahle (*Altisländisches Elementarbuch*, Heidelberg, 1896) being better suited for advanced students; the English grammars included in Vigfusson and Powell's *Icelandic Reader* (Oxford) and Sweet's *Icelandic Primer* (Oxford) are more elementary, and therefore hardly adequate for the study of the verse literature.

### II. Translations.

There are English translations of the Elder Edda by Anderson (Chicago, 1879) and Thorpe (1866), as well as the translations in the *Corpus Poeticum*, which are, of course, liable to the same objection as the text. The most accurate German translation is Gering's (Leipzig, 1893); in Simrock's (*Aeltere und Jüngere Edda*, Stuttgart, 1882), the translations of the verse Edda are based on an uncritical text. Snorra Edda was translated into English by Dasent (Stockholm, 1842); also by Anderson (Chicago, 1880).

### III. Modern Authorities.

To the works on Northern mythology mentioned below in the note on the Baldr theories, must be added Dr. Rydberg's *Teutonic Mythology* (English version by R. B. Anderson, London, 1889), which devotes special attention to Saxo.

# NOTES

## HOME OF THE EDDA. (Page 2.)

THE chief apologists for the British theory are Professor Bugge (*Studien über die Entstehung der nordischen Götter- und Heldensagen*, München, 1889), and the editors of the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (see the Introduction to that work, and also the Prolegomena prefixed to their edition of the *Sturlunga Saga*, Oxford). The case for Norway and Greenland is argued by Dr. Finnur Jónsson (*Den oldnorske og oldislandske Literaturs - Historie*, Copenhagen). The cases for both British and Norwegian origin are based chiefly on rather fanciful arguments from supposed local colour. The theory of the *Corpus Poeticum* editors that many of the poems were composed in the Scottish isles is discredited by the absence of Gaelic words or traces of Gaelic legend. Professor Bugge's North of England theory is slightly stronger, being supported by several Old English expressions in the poems, but these are not enough to prove that they were composed in England, since most Icelanders travelled east at some time of their lives.

## (Page 3.)

A later study will deal with the Heroic legends.

### YNGLINGA SAGA. (Page 3.)

*Ynglinga Saga* is prefixed to the Lives of the Kings in the collection known as *Heimskringla* (edited by Unger, Christiania, 1868, and by Finnur Jónsson, Christiania, 1893); there is an English translation in Laing's *Lives of the Kings of Norway* (London, 1889).

### VÖLUSPA. (Page 4.)

A poem of similar form occurs among the heroic poems. *Gripisspa*, a prophetic outline of Sigurd's life, introduces the Volsung poems, as *Völuspa* does the Asgard cycle.

### RIDDLE-POEMS. (Page 6.)

So many of the mythological poems are in this form that they suggest the question, did the asking of riddles form any part of Scandinavian ritual?

### THE AESIR. (Page 11.)

*Ynglinga Saga* says that Odin and the Aesir came to Norway from Asia; a statement due, of course, to a false etymology, though theories as to the origin of Norse mythology have been based on it.

### TYR. (Page 12.)

Tyr is etymologically identical with Zeus, and with the Sanskrit Dyaus (Sky-God).

### BALDR. (Pages 16 to 22.)

The Baldr theories are stated in the following authorities:

(1) Ritual origin: Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, vol. 3.

(2) Heroic origin: Golther, *Handbuch der Germanischen Mythologie* (Leipzig, 1895); Niedner, *Eddische Fragen* (*Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, new series, 29), *Zur Lieder-Edda* (*Zeitschr. f. d. Alt.* vol. 36).

(3) Solar myth: Sir G. W. Cox, *Mythology of the Aryan Nations* (London, 1870); Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. 4.

(4) Borrowed: Bugge, *Studien über die Entstehung der nordischen Götter- und Heldensagen* (transl. Brenner, München, 1889).

### VEGTAMSKVIDA. (Page 17.)

The word *hroðrbaðm* (which I have given as "branch of fame") would perhaps be more accurately translated "tree of fame," which Gering explains as a kenning for Baldr. But there are no kennings of the same sort in the poem, and the line would have no meaning. If it refers to the mistletoe, as most commentators agree, it merely shows that the poet was ignorant of the nature of the plant, which would be in favour of its antiquity, rather than the reverse.

### SAXO GRAMMATICUS. (Page 18.)

English translation by Professor Elton (London, D. Nutt, 1894). As Saxo's references to the old Gods are made in much the same sympathetic tone as that adopted by Old Testament writers towards heathen deities, his testimony on mythological questions is of the less value.

### THE MISTLETOE. (Page 20.)

It seems incredible that any writers should turn to the

travesty of the Baldr story given in the almost worthless saga of Hromund Gripsson in support of a theory. In it "Bildr" is killed by Hromund, who has the sword Mistilteinn. It must be patent to any one that this is a perverted version of a story which the narrator no longer understood.

### Loki. (Page 26.)

It is hardly necessary to point out the parallel between Loki and Prometheus, also both helper and enemy of the Gods, and agent in their threatened fall, though in the meantime a prisoner. In character Loki has more in common with the mischievous spirit described by Hesiod, than with the heroic figure of Aeschylus. The struggles of Loki (p. 28) find a parallel in those of the fire-serpent Typhon, to which the Greeks attributed earthquakes.

### Eclipse Ritual. (Page 35.)

Mr. Lang, in *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* (London, 1887), gives examples of eclipse ritual. Grimm, in the *Teutonic Mythology*, vol. 2, quotes Finnish and Lithuanian myths about sun-devouring beasts, very similar to the Fenri myth.

### The Skalds. (Page 35.)

All the Skaldic verses will be found, with translations, in the *Corpus Poeticum*.

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# The Edda : II.

# The Heroic Mythology of the North

By

Winifred Faraday, M.A.

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## *AUTHOR'S NOTE*

*The present study forms a sequel to No.* 12 (The Edda : Divine Mythology of the North), *to which the reader is referred for introductory matter and for the general Bibliography. Additional bibliographical references are given, as the need occurs, in the notes to the present number.*

*MANCHESTER,*
*July* 1902.

# THE EDDA:

## II. THE HEROIC MYTHOLOGY OF THE NORTH

SIGEMUND the Waelsing and Fitela, Aetla, Eormanric the Goth and Gifica of Burgundy, Ongendtheow and Theodric, Heorrenda and the Heodenings, and Weland the Smith: all these heroes of Germanic legend were known to the writers of our earliest English literature. But in most cases the only evidence of this knowledge is a word, a name, here and there, with no hint of the story attached. For circumstances directed the poetical gifts of the Saxons in England towards legends of the saints and Biblical paraphrase, away from the native heroes of the race; while later events completed the exclusion of Germanic legend from our literature, by substituting French and Celtic romance. Nevertheless, these few brief references in *Beowulf* and in the small group of heathen English relics give us the right to a peculiar interest in the hero-poems of the Edda.

In studying these heroic poems, therefore, we are confronted by problems entirely different in character from those which have to be considered in connexion with the mythical texts. Those are in the main the product of one, the Northern, branch of the Germanic race, as we have seen (No. 12 of this series), and the chief question to be determined is whether they represent, however altered in form, a mythology common to all the Germans, and as such necessarily early; or whether they are in substance, as well as in form, a specific creation of the Scandinavians, and therefore late and secondary. The heroic poems of the Edda, on the contrary, with the exception of the Helgi cycle, have very close analogues in the literatures of the other great branches of the Germanic race, and these we are able to compare with the Northern versions.

The Edda contains poems belonging to the following heroic cycles:

(*a*) **Weland the Smith.**—Anglo-Saxon literature has several references to this cycle, which must have been a very popular one; and there is also a late Continental German version preserved in an Icelandic translation. But the poem in the Edda is the oldest connected form of the story.

(*b*) **Sigurd and the Nibelungs.**—Again the oldest reference is in Anglo-Saxon. There

are two well-known Continental German versions in the *Nibelungen Lied* and the late Icelandic *Thidreks Saga*, but the Edda, on the whole, has preserved an earlier form of the legend. With it is loosely connected

(*c*) **The Ermanric Cycle.**—The oldest references to this are in Latin and Anglo-Saxon. The Continental German version in the *Thidreks Saga* is late, and, like that in the Edda, contaminated with the Sigurd story, with which it had originally nothing to do.

(*d*) **Helgi.**—This cycle, at least in its present form, is peculiar to the Scandinavian North.

All the above-named poems are contained in Codex Regius of the Elder Edda. From other sources we may add other poems which are Eddic, not Skaldic, in style, in which other heroic cycles are represented. The great majority of the poems deal with the favourite story of the Volsungs, which threatens to swamp all the rest; for one hero after another, Burgundian, Hun, Goth, was absorbed into it. The poems in this part of the MS. differ far more widely in date and style than do the mythological ones; many of the Volsung-lays are comparatively late, and lack the fine simplicity which characterises the older popular poetry.

**Völund.**—The lay of Völund, the wonderful smith, the Weland of the Old English poems and

the only Germanic hero who survived for any considerable time in English popular tradition, stands alone in its cycle, and is the first heroic poem in the MS. It is in a very fragmentary state, some of the deficiencies being supplied by short pieces of prose. There are two motives in the story: the Swan-maids, and the Vengeance of the Captive Smith. Three brothers, Slagfinn, Egil and Völund, sons of the Finnish King, while out hunting built themselves a house by the lake in Wolfsdale. There, early one morning, they saw three Valkyries spinning, their swancoats lying beside them. The brothers took them home; but after seven years the swan-maidens, wearied of their life, flew away to battle, and did not return.

"Seven years they stayed there, but in the eighth longing seized them, and in the ninth need parted them." Egil and Slagfinn went to seek their wives, but Völund stayed where he was and worked at his forge. There Nithud, King of Sweden, took him captive:

> "Men went by night in studded mailcoats; their shields shone by the waning moon. They dismounted from the saddle at the hall-gable, and went in along the hall. They saw rings strung on bast which the hero owned, seven hundred in all; they took them off and put them on again, all but one. The keen-eyed archer Völund came in from hunting, from a far road. . . . He sat on a bear-skin and counted his rings, and the prince of the elves missed one; he thought Hlodve's

daughter, the fairy-maid, had come back. He sat so long that he fell asleep, and awoke powerless: heavy bonds were on his hands, and fetters clasped on his feet."

They took him away and imprisoned him, hamstrung, on an island to forge treasures for his captors. Then Völund planned vengeance:

"'I see on Nithud's girdle the sword which I knew keenest and best, and which I forged with all my skill. The glittering blade is taken from me for ever; I shall not see it borne to Völund's smithy. Now Bödvild wears my bride's red ring; I expect no atonement.' He sat and slept not, but struck with his hammer."

Nithud's children came to see him in his smithy: the two boys he slew, and made drinking-cups for Nithud from their skulls; and the daughter Bödvild he beguiled, and having made himself wings he rose into the air and left her weeping for her lover and Nithud mourning his sons.

In the Old English poems allusion is made only to the second part of the story; there is no reference to the legend of the enchanted brides, which is indeed distinct in origin, being identical with the common tale of the fairy wife who is obliged to return to animal shape through some breach of agreement by her mortal husband. This incident of the compact (*i.e.*, to hide the swan-coat, to refrain from asking the wife's name, or whatever it may have been) has been lost in the Völund

tale. The Continental version is told in the late Icelandic *Thidreks Saga*, where it is brought into connexion with the Volsung story; in this the story of the second brother, Egil the archer, is also given, and its antiquity is supported by the pictures on the Anglo-Saxon carved whale-bone box known as the Franks Casket, dated by Professor Napier at about 700 A.D. The adventures of the third brother, Slagfinn, have not survived. The Anglo-Saxon gives Völund and Bödvild a son, Widia or Wudga, the Wittich who appears as a follower of Dietrich's in the Continental German sources.

**The Volsungs.**—No story better illustrates the growth of heroic legend than the Volsung cycle. It is composite, four or five mythical motives combining to form the nucleus; and as it took possession more and more strongly of the imagination of the early Germans, and still more of the Scandinavians, other heroic cycles were brought into dependence on it. None of the Eddic poems on the subject are quite equal in poetic value to the Helgi lays; many are fragmentary, several late, and only one attempts a review of the whole story. The outline is as follows: Sigurd the Volsung, son of Sigmund and brother of Sinfjötli, slays the dragon who guards the Nibelungs' hoard on the Glittering Heath, and thus inherits the curse which

accompanies the treasure; he finds and wakens Brynhild the Valkyrie, lying in an enchanted sleep guarded by a ring of fire, loves her and plights troth with her; Grimhild, wife of the Burgundian Giuki, by enchantment causes him to forget the Valkyrie, to love her own daughter Gudrun, and, since he alone can cross the fire, to win Brynhild for her son Gunnar. After the marriage, Brynhild discovers the trick, and incites her husband and his brothers to kill Sigurd.

The series begins with a prose piece on the Death of Sinfjötli,, which says that after Sinfjötli, son of Sigmund, Volsung's son (which should be Valsi's son, Volsung being a tribal, not a personal, name), had been poisoned by his stepmother Borghild, Sigmund married Hjördis, Eylimi's daughter, had a son Sigurd, and fell in battle against the race of Hunding. Sigmund, as in all other Norse sources, is said to be king in Frankland, which, like the Niderlant of the *Nibelungen Lied*, means the low lands on the Rhine. The scene of the story is always near that river: Sigurd was slain by the Rhine, and the treasure of the Rhine is quoted as proverbial in the Völund lay.

*Gripisspa* (the Prophecy of Gripi), which follows, is appropriately placed first of the Volsung poems, since it gives a summary of the whole story. Sigurd rides to see his mother's brother, Gripi, the wisest of men, to ask about his destiny, and the soothsayer

prophesies his adventures and early death. This poem makes clear some original features of the legend which are obscured elsewhere, especially in the Gudrun set; Grimhild's treachery, and Sigurd's unintentional breach of faith to Brynhild. In the speeches of both Gripi and Sigurd, the poet shows clearly that Brynhild had the first right to Sigurd's faith, while the seer repeatedly protests his innocence in breaking it: "Thou shalt never be blamed though thou didst betray the royal maid. . . . No better man shall come on earth beneath the sun than thou, Sigurd." On the other hand, the poet gives no indication that Brynhild and the sleeping Valkyrie are the same, which is a sign of confusion. Like all poems in this form, *Gripisspa* is a late composition embodying earlier tradition.

The other poems are mostly episodical, though arranged so as to form a continued narrative. *Gripisspa* is followed by a compilation from two or more poems in different metres, generally divided into three parts in the editions: *Reginsmal* gives the early history of the treasure and the dragon, and Sigurd's battle with Hunding's sons; *Fafnismal*, the slaying of the dragon and the advice of the talking birds; *Sigrdrifumal*, the awakening of the Valkyrie. Then follows a fragment on the death of Sigurd. All the rest, except the poem generally called the *Third*, or *Short*, *Sigurd Lay* (which tells of the marriage with Gudrun and Sigurd's wooing

of Brynhild for Gunnar) continue the story after Sigurd's death, taking up the death of Brynhild, Gudrun's mourning, and the fates of the other heroes who became connected with the legend of the treasure.

In addition to the poems in the Elder Edda, an account of the story is given by Snorri in *Skaldskaparmal*, but it is founded almost entirely on the surviving lays. *Völsunga Saga* is also a paraphrase, but more valuable, since parts of it are founded on lost poems, and it therefore, to some extent, represents independent tradition. It was, unfortunately from a literary point of view, compiled after the great saga-time was over, in the decadent fourteenth century, when material of all kinds, classical, biblical, romantic, mythological, was hastily cast into saga-form. It is not, like the *Nibelungen Lied*, a work of art, but it has what in this case is perhaps of greater importance, the one great virtue of fidelity. The compiler did not, like the author of the German masterpiece, boldly recast his material in the spirit of his own time; he clung closely to his originals, only trying with hesitating hand to copy the favourite literary form of the Icelander. As a saga, therefore, *Völsunga* is far behind not only such great works as *Njala*, but also many of the smaller sagas. It lacks form, and is marred by inconsistencies; it is often careless in grammar and diction; it is full of traces of the decadent

romantic age. Sigurd, in the true spirit of romance, is endowed with magic weapons and supernatural powers, which are no improvement on the heroic tradition, "Courage is better than a good sword." At every turn, Odin is at hand to help him, which tends to efface the older and truer picture of the hero with all the fates against him; such heroes, found again and again in the historic sagas, more truly represent the heathen heroic age and that belief in the selfishness and caprice of the Gods on which the whole idea of sacrifice rests. There is also the inevitable deterioration in the character of Brynhild, without the compensating elevation in that of her rival by which the *Nibelungen Lied* places Chriemhild on a height as lofty and unapproachable as that occupied by the Norse Valkyrie; the Brynhild of *Völsunga Saga* is something of a virago, the Gudrun is jealous and shrewish. But for actual material, the compiler is absolutely to be trusted; and *Völsunga Saga* is therefore, in spite of artistic faults, a priceless treasure-house for the real features of the legend.

There are two main elements in the Volsung story: the slaying of the dragon, and the awakening and desertion of Brynhild. The latter is brought into close connexion with the former, which becomes the real centre of the action. In the Anglo-Saxon reference, the fragment in *Beowulf*, the second episode does not appear.

In this, the oldest version of the story, which, except for a vague reference to early feats by Sigmund and Sinfjötli, consists solely of the dragon adventure, the hero is not Sigurd, but Sigemund the Waelsing. All that it tells is that Sigemund, Fitela (Sinfjötli) not being with him, killed the dragon, the guardian of the hoard, and loaded a ship with the treasure. The few preceding lines only mention the war which Sigmund and Sinfjötli waged on their foes. They are there uncle and nephew, and there is no suggestion of the closer relationship assigned to them by *Völsunga Saga*, which tells their story in full.

Sigmund, one of the ten sons of Volsung (who is himself of miraculous birth) and the Wishmaiden Hlod, is one of the chosen heroes of Odin. His twin-sister Signy is married against her will to Siggeir, an hereditary enemy, and at the wedding-feast Odin enters and thrusts a sword up to the hilt into the tree growing in the middle of the hall. All try to draw it, but only the chosen Sigmund succeeds. Siggeir, on returning to his own home with his unwilling bride, invites her father and brothers to a feast. Though suspecting treachery, they come, and are killed one after another, except Sigmund who is secretly saved by his sister and hidden in the wood. She meditates revenge, and as her two sons grow up to the age of ten, she tests their courage, and finding it wanting makes

Sigmund kill both: the expected hero must be a Volsung through both parents. She therefore visits Sigmund in disguise, and her third son, Sinfjötli, is the child of the Volsung pair. At ten years old, she sends him to live in the wood with Sigmund, who only knows him as Signy's son. For years they live as wer-wolves in the wood, till the time comes for vengeance. They set fire to Siggeir's hall; and Signy, after revealing Sinfjötli's real parentage, goes back into the fire and dies there, her vengeance achieved:

> "I killed my children, because I thought them too weak to avenge our father; Sinfjötli has a warrior's might because he is both son's son and daughter's son to King Volsung. I have laboured to this end, that King Siggeir should meet his death; I have so toiled for the achieving of revenge that I am now on no condition fit for life. As I lived by force with King Siggeir, of free will shall I die with him."

Though no poem survives on this subject, the story is certainly primitive; its savage character vouches for its antiquity. *Völsunga* then reproduces the substance of the prose *Death of Sinfjötli* mentioned above, the object of which, as a part of the cycle, seems to be to remove Sinfjötli and leave the field clear for Sigurd. It preserves a touch which may be original in Sinfjötli's burial, which resembles that of Scyld in *Beowulf*: his father lays him in a boat steered by an old man, which immediately disappears.

Sigmund and Sinfjötli are always close comrades, "need-companions" as the Anglo-Saxon calls them. They are indivisible and form one story. Sigurd, on the other hand, is only born after his father Sigmund's death. *Völsunga* says that Sigmund fell in battle against Hunding, through the interference of Odin, who, justifying Loki's taunt that he "knew not how to give the victory fairly," shattered with his spear the sword he had given to the Volsung. For this again we have to depend entirely on the prose, except for one line in *Hyndluljod:* "The Father of Hosts gives gold to his followers; . . . he gave Sigmund a sword." And from the poems too, Sigurd's fatherless childhood is only to be inferred from an isolated reference, where giving himself a false name he says to Fafni: "I came a motherless child; I have no father like the sons of men." Sigmund, dying, left the fragments of the sword to be given to his unborn son, and Sigurd's fosterfather Regin forged them anew for the future dragon-slayer. But Sigurd's first deed was to avenge on Hunding's race the death of his father and his mother's father. *Völsunga* tells this story first of Helgi and Sinfjötli, then of Sigurd, to whom the poems also attribute the deed. It is followed by the dragon-slaying.

Up to this point, the story of Sigurd consists roughly of the same features which mark that of Sigmund and Sinfjötli. Both are probably, like

Helgi, versions of a race-hero myth. In each case there is the usual irregular birth, in different forms, both familiar; a third type, the miraculous or supernatural birth, is attributed by *Völsunga* to Sigmund's father Volsung. Each story again includes a deed of vengeance, and a dragon and treasure. The sword which the hero alone could draw, and the wer-wolf, appear only in the Sigmund and Sinfjötli version. Among those Germanic races which brought the legend to full perfection, Sigurd's version soon became the sole one, and Sigmund and Sinfjötli practically drop out.

The Dragon legend of the Edda is much fuller and more elaborate than that of any other mythology. As a rule tradition is satisfied with the existence of the monster "old and proud of his treasure," but here we are told its full previous history, certain features of which (such as the shape-shifting) are signs of antiquity, whether it was originally connected with the Volsungs or not.

As usual, *Völsunga* gives the fullest account, in the form of a story told by Regin to his foster-son Sigurd, to incite him to slay the dragon. Regin was one of three brothers, the sons of Hreidmar; one of the three, Otr, while in the water in otter's shape, was seen by three of the Aesir, Odin, Loki and Hoeni, and killed by Loki. Hreidmar demanded as wergild enough gold to fill the otter's

skin, and Loki obtained it by catching the dwarf Andvari, who lived in a waterfall in the form of a fish, and allowing him to ransom his head by giving up his wealth. One ring the dwarf tried to keep back, but in vain; and thereupon he laid a curse upon it: that the ring with the rest of the gold should be the death of whoever should get possession of it. In giving the gold to Hreidmar, Odin also tried to keep back the ring, but had to give it up to cover the last hair. Then Fafni, one of the two remaining sons, killed his father, first victim of the curse, for the sake of the gold. He carried it away and lay guarding it in the shape of a snake. But Regin the smith did not give up his hopes of possessing the hoard: he adopted as his foster-son Sigurd the Volsung, thus getting into his power the hero fated to slay the dragon.

The curse thus becomes the centre of the action, and the link between the two parts of the story, since it directly accounts for Sigurd's unconscious treachery and his separation from Brynhild, and absolves the hero from blame by making him a victim of fate. It destroys in turn Hreidmar, the Dragon, his brother Regin, the dragon-slayer himself, Brynhild (to whom he gave the ring), and the Giukings, who claimed inheritance after Sigurd's death. Later writers carried its effects still further.

This narrative is also told in the pieces of prose

interspersed through *Reginsmal*. The verse consists only of scraps of dialogue. The first of these comprises question and answer between Loki and the dwarf Andvari in the form of the old riddle-poems, and seems to result from the confusion of two ideas: the question-and-answer wager, and the captive's ransom by treasure. Then follows the curse, in less general terms than in the prose: "My gold shall be the death of two brothers, and cause strife among eight kings; no one shall rejoice in the possession of my treasure." Next comes a short dialogue between Loki and Hreidmar, in which the former warns his host of the risk he runs in taking the hoard. In the next fragment Hreidmar calls on his daughters to avenge him; Lyngheid replies that they cannot do so on their own brother, and her father bids her bear a daughter whose son may avenge him. This has given rise to a suggestion that Hjördis, Sigurd's mother, was daughter to Lyngheid, but if that is intended, it may only be due to the Norse passion for genealogy. The next fragment brings Regin and Sigurd together, and the smith takes the young Volsung for his foster-son. A speech of Sigurd's follows, in which he refuses to seek the treasure till he has avenged his father on Hunding's sons. The rest of the poem is concerned with the battle with Hunding's race, and Sigurd's meeting with Odin by the way.

The fight with Fafni is not described in verse, very little of this poetry being in narrative form; but *Fafnismal* gives a dialogue between the wounded dragon and his slayer. Fafni warns the Volsung against the hoard: "The ringing gold and the glowing treasure, the rings shall be thy death." Sigurd disregards the warning with the maxim "Every man must die some time," and asks questions of the dragon in the manner of *Vafthrudnismal*. Fafni, after repeating his warning, speaks of his brother's intended treachery: "Regin betrayed me, he will betray thee; he will be the death of both of us," and dies. Regin returning bids Sigurd roast Fafni's heart, while he sleeps. A prose-piece tells that Sigurd burnt his fingers by touching the heart, put them in his mouth, and understood the speech of birds. The advice given him by the birds is taken from two different poems, and partly repeats itself; the substance is a warning to Sigurd against the treachery plotted by Regin, and a counsel to prevent it by killing him, and so become sole owner of the hoard. Sigurd takes advantage of the warning: "Fate shall not be so strong that Regin shall give my death-sentence: both brothers shall go quickly hence to Hel." Regin's enjoyment of the hoard is therefore short.

The second half of the story begins when one of the birds, after a reference to Gudrun, guides Sigurd to the sleeping Valkyrie:

"Bind up the red rings, Sigurd; it is not kingly to fear. I know a maid, fairest of all, decked with gold, if thou couldst get her. Green roads lead to Giuki's, fate guides the wanderer forward. There a mighty king has a daughter; Sigurd will buy her with a dowry. There is a hall high on Hindarfell; all without it is swept with fire. . . . I know a battle-maid who sleeps on the fell, and the flame plays over her; Odin touched the maid with a thorn, because she laid low others than those he wished to fall. Thou shalt see, boy, the helmed maid who rode Vingskorni from the fight; Sigrdrifa's sleep cannot be broken, son of heroes, by the Norns' decrees."

Sigrdrifa (dispenser of victory) is, of course, Brynhild; the name may have been originally an epithet of the Valkyrie, and it was probably such passages as this that misled the author of *Gripisspa* into differentiating the Valkyrie and Brynhild. The last lines have been differently interpreted as a warning to Sigurd not to seek Brynhild and an attempt to incite him to do so by emphasising the difficulty of the deed; they may merely mean that her sleep cannot be broken except by one, namely, the one who knows no fear. Brynhild's supernatural origin is clearly shown here, and also in the prose in *Sigrdrifumal*. *Völsunga Saga*, though it paraphrases in full the passages relating to the magic sleep, removes much of the mystery surrounding her by providing her with a genealogy and family connections; while the *Nibelungen Lied* goes further still in the same direction by leaving out

the magic sleep. The change is a natural result of Christian ideas, to which Odin's Wishmaidens would become incomprehensible.

Thus far the story is that of the release of the enchanted princess, popularly most familiar in the nursery tale of the Sleeping Beauty. After her broken questions to her deliverer, "What cut my mail? How have I broken from sleep? Who has flung from me the dark spells?" and his answer, "Sigmund's son and Sigurd's sword," she bursts into the famous "Greeting to the World":

> "Long have I slept, long was I sunk in sleep, long are men's misfortunes. It was Odin's doing that I could not break the runes of sleep. Hail, day! hail, sons of day! hail, night! Look on us two with gracious eyes, and give victory to us who sit here. Hail, Aesir! hail, Asynjor! hail, Earth, mother of all! give eloquence and wisdom to us the wonderful pair, and hands of healing while we live."

She then becomes Sigurd's guardian and protectress and the source of his wisdom, as she speaks the runes and counsels which are to help him in all difficulties; and from this point corresponds to the maiden who is the hero's benefactress, but whom he deserts through sorcery: the "Mastermaid" of the fairy-tales, the Medeia of Greek myth. Gudrun is always an innocent instrument in drawing Sigurd away from his real bride, the actual agent being her witch-mother Grimhild. This part of the story is summarised in *Gripisspa*, except that the

writer seems unaware that the Wishmaiden who teaches Sigurd "every mystery that men would know" and the princess he betrays are the same:

> "A king's daughter bright in mail sleeps on the fell; thou shalt hew with thy sharp sword, and cut the mail with Fafni's slayer. . . . She will teach thee every mystery that men would know, and to speak in every man's tongue. . . . Thou shalt visit Heimi's dwelling and be the great king's joyous guest. . . . There is a maid fair to see at Heimi's; men call her Brynhild, Budli's daughter, but the great king Heimi fosters the proud maid. . . . Heimi's fair foster-daughter will rob thee of all joy; thou shalt sleep no sleep, and judge no cause, and care for no man unless thou see the maiden. . . . Ye shall swear all binding oaths but keep few · when thou hast been one night Giuki's guest, thou shalt not remember Heimi's brave foster-daughter. . . . Thou shalt suffer treachery from another and pay the price of Grimhild's plots. The bright-haired lady will offer thee her daughter."

*Völsunga* gives additional details: Brynhild knows her deliverer to be Sigurd Sigmundsson and the slayer of Fafni, and they swear oaths to each other. The description of their second meeting, when he finds her among her maidens, and she prophesies that he will marry Giuki's daughter, and also the meeting between her and Gudrun before the latter's marriage, represent a later development of the story, inconsistent with the older conception of the Shield-maiden. Sigurd gives Brynhild the ring Andvaranaut, which belonged to the hoard, as a pledge, and takes it from her again

later when he woos her in Gunnar's form. It is the sight of the ring afterwards on Gudrun's hand which reveals to her the deception; but the episode has also a deeper significance, since it brings her into connection with the central action by passing the curse on to her. According to Snorri's paraphrase, Sigurd gives the ring to Brynhild when he goes to her in Gunnar's form.

For the rest of the story we must depend chiefly on *Gripisspa* and *Völsunga*. The latter tells that Grimhild, the mother of the Giukings, gave Sigurd a magic drink by which he forgot Brynhild and fell in love with Giuki's daughter. Gudrun's brothers swore oaths of friendship with him, and he agreed to ride through the waverlowe, or ring of fire, disguised and win Brynhild for the eldest brother Gunnar. After the two bridals, he remembered his first passing through the flame, and his love for Brynhild returned. The Shield-maiden too remembered, but thinking that Gunnar had fairly won her, accepted her fate until Gudrun in spite and jealousy revealed the trick that had been played on her. Of the treachery of the Giukings Brynhild takes little heed; but death alone can pay for Sigurd's unconscious betrayal. She tells Gunnar that Sigurd has broken faith with him, and the Giukings with some reluctance murder their sister's husband. Brynhild springs on to the funeral pyre, and dies with Sigurd. *Völsunga* makes the murder take place in

Sigurd's chamber, and one poem, the *Short Sigurd Lay*, agrees. The fragment which follows *Sigrdrifumal*, on the other hand, places the scene in the open air:

> "Sigurd was slain south of the Rhine; a raven on a tree called aloud: 'On you will Atli redden the sword; your broken oaths shall destroy you.' Gudrun Giuki's daughter stood without, and these were the first words she spoke: 'Where is now Sigurd, the lord of men, that my kinsmen ride first?' Högni alone made answer: 'We have hewn Sigurd asunder with the sword; the grey horse still stoops over his dead lord.'"

This agrees with the *Old Gudrun Lay* and with the Continental German version, as a prose epilogue points out.

Of the Giuking brothers, Gunnar appears only in a contemptible light: he gains his bride by treachery, and keeps his oath to Sigurd by a quibble. Högni, who has little but his name in common with Hagen von Tronje of the *Nibelungen Lied*, advises Gunnar against breaking his oath, but it is he who taunts Gudrun afterwards. The later poems of the cycle try to make heroes out of both; the same discrepancy exists between the first and second halves of the *Nibelungen Lied*. Their half-brother, Gutthorm, plays no part in the story except as the actual murderer of Sigurd.

The chief effect of the influences of Christianity and Romance on the legend is a loss of sympathy

with the heroic type of Brynhild, and an attempt to give more dignity to the figure of Gudrun. The Shield-maiden of divine origin and unearthly wisdom, with her unrelenting vengeance on her beloved, and her contempt for her slighter rival ("Fitter would it be for Gudrun to die with Sigurd, if she had a soul like mine"), is a figure out of harmony with the new religion, and beyond the comprehension of a time coloured by romance; while both the sentiment and the morality of the age would be on the side of Gudrun as the formally wedded wife. So the poem known as the *Short Sigurd Lay*, which has many marks of lateness, such as the elaborate description of the funeral pyre and the exaggeration of the signs of mourning, says nothing of Sigurd's love for Brynhild, nor do his last words to Gudrun give any hint of it. The *Nibelungen Lied* suppresses Sigurd's love to Brynhild, and the magic drink, and altogether lowers Brynhild, but elevates Gudrun (under her mother's name); her slow but terrible vengeance, and absolute forgetfulness of the ties of blood in pursuit of it, are equal to anything in the original version. The later heroic poems of the Edda make a less successful attempt to create sympathy for Gudrun; some, such as the so-called *First Gudrun Lay*, which is entirely romantic in character, try to make her pathetic by the abundance of tears she sheds; others, to make her heroic, though the result is only a spurious savagery.

The remaining poems of the cycle, all late in style and tone, deal with the fates of Gudrun and her brothers, and owe their existence to a narrator's unwillingness to let a favourite story end. The curse makes continuation easy, since the Giukings inherit it with the hoard. Gudrun was married at the wish of her kinsmen to Atli the Hun, said to be Brynhild's brother. He invited Gunnar and Högni to his court and killed them for the sake of the treasure, in vengeance for which Gudrun killed her own two sons and Atli; this latter incident being possibly an imitation of Signy. If we may believe that Gudrun, like Chriemhild in the *Nibelungen Lied*, married Atli in order to gain vengeance for Sigurd, we might suppose that there was confusion here: that she herself incited the murder of her brothers, and killed Atli when he had served his purpose. This would strengthen the part of Gudrun, who as the tale stands is rather a futile character. But in all probability the episode is due to a confusion of Signy's story with that of the German Chriemhild and Etzel.

One point has still to be considered: the place of the Nibelungs in the story. In the Edda, the Hniflungs are always the Giukings, Gunnar and Högni, and Snorri gives it as the name of an heroic family. The title of the first *aventiure* of the *Nibelungen Lied* also apparently uses the word of the Burgundians. Yet the treasure is always the

Nibelungs' hoard, which clearly means that they were the original owners; and when Hagen von Tronje tells the story later in the poem, he speaks of the Nibelungs correctly as the dwarfs from whom Siegfried won it. On this point, therefore, the German preserves the older tradition: the Norse Andvari, the river-dwarf, is the German Alberich the Nibelung. In the *Nibelungen Lied* the winning of the treasure forms no part of the action: it is merely narrated by Hagen. This accounts for the shortening of the episode and the omission of the intermediate steps: the robbing of the dwarf, the curse, and the dragon-slaying.

**Ermanric.**—The two poems of *Gudrun's Lament* and *Hamthismal*, in the Edda attached to the Volsung cycle, belong correctly to that of the Gothic hero Ermanric. According to these poems, Gudrun, Giuki's daughter, married a third time, and had three sons, Sörli, Hamthi and Erp. She married Svanhild, her own and Sigurd's daughter, to Jörmunrek, king of the Goths; but Svanhild was slandered, and her husband had her trodden to death by horses' hoofs. The description of Svanhild is a good example of the style of the romantic poems:

"The bondmaids sat round Svanhild, dearest of my children; Svanhild was like a glorious sunbeam in my hall. I dowered her with gold and goodly fabrics

when I married her into Gothland. That was the hardest of my griefs, when they trod Svanhild's fair hair into the dust beneath the horses' hoofs."

Gudrun sent her three sons to avenge their sister; two of them slew Erp by the way, and were killed themselves in their attack on Jörmunrek for want of his help. So died, as Snorri says, all who were of Giuking descent; and only Aslaug, daughter of Sigurd and Brynhild, survived. *Heimskringla*, a thirteenth century history of the royal races of Scandinavia, traces the descent of the Norse kings from her.

This Ermanric story, which belongs to legendary history rather than myth, is in reality quite independent of the Volsung or Nibelung cycle. The connection is loose and inartistic, the legend being probably linked to Gudrun's name because she had become a favourite character and Icelandic narrators were unwilling to let her die. The historic Ermanric was conquered by the Huns in 374; the sixth century historian Jornandes is the earliest authority for the tradition that he was murdered by Sarus and Ammius in revenge for their sister's death by wild horses. Saxo also tells the story, with greater similarity of names. It seems hardly necessary to assume, with many scholars, the existence of two heroes of the name Ermanric, an historic and a mythical one. A simpler explanation is that a legendary story

became connected with the name of a real personage. The slaying of Erp introduces a common folk-tale incident, familiar in stories like the *Golden Bird*, told by both Asbjörnsen and Grimm.

**Helgi.**—The Helgi-lays, three in number, are the best of the heroic poems. Nominally they tell two stories, Helgi Hjörvardsson being sandwiched between the two poems of Helgi Hundingsbane; but essentially the stories are the same.

In *Helgi Hjörvardsson*, Helgi, son of Hjörvard and Sigrlinn, was dumb and nameless until a certain day when, while sitting on a howe, he saw a troop of nine Valkyries. The fairest, Svava, Eylimi's daughter, named him, and bidding him avenge his grandfather on Hrodmar (a former wooer of Sigrlinn's, and her father's slayer), sent him to find a magic sword. Helgi slew Hrodmar and married Svava, having escaped from the sea-giantess Hrimgerd through the protection of his Valkyrie bride and the wit of a faithful servant. His brother Hedin, through the spells of a troll-wife, swore to wed Helgi's bride. Repenting, he told his brother, who, dying in a fight with Hrodmar's son, charged Svava to marry Hedin. A note by the collector adds "Helgi and Svava are said to have been born again."

In *Helgi Hundingsbane I.*, Helgi is the son of Sigmund and Borghild. He fought and slew

Hunding, and afterwards met in battle Hunding's sons at Logafell, where the Valkyrie Sigrun, Högni's daughter, protected him, and challenged him to fight Hödbrodd to whom her father had plighted her. She protected his ships in the storm which overtook them as they sailed to meet Hödbrodd, and watched over him in the battle, in which he slew his rival and was greeted as victor by Sigrun: "Hail, hero of Yngvi's race . . . thou shalt have both the red rings and the mighty maid: thine are Högni's daughter and Hringstad, the victory and the land."

*Helgi Hundingsbane II.*, besides giving additional details of the hero's early life, completes the story. In the battle with Hödbrodd, Helgi killed all Sigrun's kinsmen except one brother, Dag, who slew him later in vengeance. But Helgi returned from the grave, awakened by Sigrun's weeping, and she went into the howe with him. The collector again adds a note: "Helgi and Sigrun are said to have been born again: he was then called Helgi Haddingjaskati, and she Kara Halfdan's daughter, as it is told in the Kara-ljod, and she was a Valkyrie."

This third Helgi legend does not survive in verse, the *Kara-ljod* having perished. It is told in prose in the late saga of Hromund Gripsson, according to which Kara was a Valkyrie and swan-maid: while she was hovering over Helgi, he killed her accidentally in swinging his sword.

There can be little doubt that these three are merely variants of the same story; the foundation is the same, though incidents and names differ. The three Helgis are one hero, and the three versions of his legend probably come from different localities. The collector could not but feel their identity, and the similarity was too fundamental to be overlooked; he therefore accounted for it by the old idea of re-birth, and thus linked the three together. In each Helgi has an hereditary foe (Hrodmar, Hunding, or Hadding); in each his bride is a Valkyrie, who protects him and gives him victory; each ends in tragedy, though differently.

The two variants in the Poetic Edda have evident marks of contamination with the Volsung cycle, and some points of superficial resemblance. Helgi Hjörvardsson's mother is Sigrlinn, Helgi Hundingsbane's father is Sigmund, as in the *Nibelungen Lied* Siegfried is the son of Sigemunt and Sigelint. Helgi Hundingsbane is a Volsung and Wolfing (Ylfing), and brother to Sinfjötli; his first fight, like Sigurd's, is against the race of Hunding; his rival, Hödbrodd, is a Hniflung; he first meets the Valkyrie on Loga-fell (Flame-hill); he is killed by his brother-in-law, who has sworn friendship. But there is no parallel to the essential features of the Volsung cycle, and such likenesses between the two stories as are not accidental are due to the influence of the more favoured legend; this is especially true

of the names. The prose-piece *Sinfjötli's Death* also makes Helgi half-brother to Sinfjötli; it is followed in this by *Völsunga Saga*, which devotes a chapter to Helgi, paraphrasing *Helgi Hundingsbane I.* There is, of course, confusion over the Hunding episode; the saga is obliged to reconcile its conflicting authorities by making Helgi kill Hunding and some of his sons, and Sigurd kill the rest.

If the theory stated below as to the original Helgi legend be correct, the feud with Hunding's race, as told in these poems, must be extraneous. I conjecture that it belonged originally to the Volsung cycle, and to the wer-wolf Sinfjötli. It must not be forgotten that, though he passes out of the Volsung story altogether in the later versions, both Scandinavian and German, he is in the main action in the earliest one (that in *Beowulf*), where even Sigurd does not appear. The feud might easily have been transferred from him to Helgi as well as to Sigurd, for invention is limited as regards episodes, and a narrator who wishes to elaborate the story of a favourite hero is often forced to borrow adventures. In the original story, Helgi's blood-feud was probably with the kindred of Sigrun or Svava.

The origin of the Helgi legend must be sought outside of the Volsung cycle. Some writers are of opinion that the name should be Holgi, and there are two stories in which a hero Holgi appears.

With the legend of Thorgerd Holgabrud, told by Saxo, who identified it with that of Helgi Hundingsbane, it has nothing in common; and the connection which has been sought with the legend of Holger Danske is equally difficult to establish. The essence of this latter story is the hero's disappearance into fairyland, and the expectation of his return sometime in the future: a motive which has been very fruitful in Irish romance, and in the traditions of Arthur, Tryggvason, and Barbarossa, among countless others. But it is absent from the Helgi poems; and the "old wives' tales" of Helgi's re-birth have nothing to do with his legend, but are merely a bookman's attempt to connect stories which he felt to be the same though different.

The essential feature of the story told in these poems is the motive familiar in that class of ballads of which the *Douglas Tragedy* is a type: the hero loves the daughter of his enemy's house, her kinsmen kill him, and she dies of grief. This is the story told in both the lays of *Helgi Hundingsbane*, complete in one, unfinished in the other. No single poem preserves all the incidents of the legend; some survive in one version, some in another, as usual in ballad literature.

Like Sinfjötli and Sigurd, Helgi is brought up in obscurity. He spends his childhood disguised in his enemy's household, and on leaving it, sends a message to tell his foes whom they have fostered.

They pursue him, and he is obliged, like Gude Wallace in the Scottish ballad, to disguise himself in a bondmaid's dress:

> "Piercing are the eyes of Hagal's bondmaid; it is no peasant's kin who stands at the mill: the stones are split, the bin springs in two. It is a hard fate for a warrior to grind the barley; the sword-hilt is better fitted for those hands than the mill-handle.'

Sigrun is present at the battle, in which, as in the English and Scottish ballads, Helgi slays all her kindred except one brother. He tells her the fortunes of the fight, and she chooses between lover and kinsmen:

> HELGI. "Good luck is not granted thee, maid, in all things, though the Norns are partly to blame. Bragi and Högni fell to-day at Frekastein, and I was their slayer; . . . most of thy kindred lie low. Thou couldst not hinder the battle: it was thy fate to be a cause of strife to heroes. Weep not, Sigrun, thou hast been Hild to us; heroes must meet their fate."
>
> SIGRUN. "I could wish those alive who are fallen, and yet rest in thy arms."

The surviving brother, Dag, swears oaths of reconciliation to Helgi, but remembers the feud. The end comes, as in the Norse Sigmund tale, through Odin's interference: he lends his spear to Dag, who stabs Helgi in a grove, and rides home to tell his sister. Sigrun is inconsolable, and curses the murderer with a rare power and directness:

"May the oaths pierce thee that thou hast sworn to Helgi. . . . May the ship sail not that sails under thee, though a fair wind lie behind. May the horse run not that runs under thee, though thou art fleeing from thy foes. May the sword bite not that thou drawest, unless it sing round thine own head. If thou wert an outlaw in the woods, Helgi's death were avenged. . . . Never again while I live, by night or day, shall I sit happy at Sevafell, if I see not the light play on my hero's company, nor the gold-bitted War-breeze run thither with the warrior."

But Helgi returns from the grave, unable to rest because of Sigrun's weeping, and she goes down into the howe with him:

SIGRUN. "Thy hair is covered with frost, Helgi; thou art drenched with deadly dew, thy hands are cold and wet. How shall I get thee help, my hero?"

HELGI. "Thou alone hast caused it, Sigrun from Sevafell, that Helgi is drenched with deadly dew. Thou weepest bitter tears before thou goest to sleep, gold-decked, sunbright, Southern maid; each one falls on my breast, bloody, cold and wet, cruel, heavy with grief. . . ."

SIGRUN. "I have made thee here a painless bed, Helgi, son of the Wolfings. I will sleep in thy arms, my warrior, as if thou wert alive."

HELGI. "There shall be no stranger thing at Sevafell, early or late, than that thou, king-born, Högni's fair daughter, shouldst be alive in the grave and sleep in a dead man's arms."

The lay of Helgi Hjörvardsson is furthest from the original, for there is no feud with Svava's kindred, nor does Helgi die at their hands; but it

preserves a feature omitted elsewhere, in his leaving his bride to his brother's protection. Like the wife in the English ballad of *Earl Brand*, and the heroine of the Danish *Ribold and Guldborg*, Svava refuses, but Hedin's last words seem to imply that he is to return and marry her after avenging Helgi. This would be contrary to all parallels, according to which Svava should die with Helgi.

The alternative ending of the *Helgi and Kara* version is interesting as providing the possible source of another Scottish ballad dealing with the same type of story. In *The Cruel Knight*, as here, the hero slays his bride, who is of a hostile family, by mistake. One passage of *Helgi Hundingsbane II.* describes Helgi's entrance into Valhalla, which, taken with the incident of Sigrun's joining him in the howe, supplies an instance of the survival side by side of inconsistent notions as to the state of the dead. The lover's return from the grave is the subject of *Clerk Saunders* (the second part) and several other Scottish ballads.

**The Song of the Mill.**—The magic mill is best known in the folk-tale, "Why the sea is salt"; but this is not the oldest part of the story, though it took most hold of the popular imagination which loves legendary explanations of natural phenomena. The hero, Frodi, a mythical

Danish king, is the northern Croesus. His reign was marked by a world-peace, and the peace, the wealth, the liberality of Frodi became proverbial. The motive of his tale is again the curse that follows gold. It is told by Snorri, in whose work *Grottasöngr* is embodied.

Frodi possessed two magic quern-stones, from which the grinder could grind out whatever he wished; but he had no one strong enough to turn them until he bought in Sweden two bondmaids of giant-race, Menja and Fenja. He set them to grind at the quern by day, and by night when all slept, and as they ground him gold, and peace, and prosperity, they sang:

> "We grind wealth for Frodi, all bliss we grind, and abundance of riches in the fortunate bin. May he sit on wealth, may he sleep on down, may he wake to delight; then the grinding were good. Here shall no man hurt another, prepare evil nor work death, nor hew with the keen sword though he find his brother's slayer bound."

But when they wearied of their toil and asked for a little rest, Frodi answered: "Ye shall sleep no longer than the cuckoo is silent, or while I speak one stave." Then the giant-maids grew angry, and sang:

> "Thou wert not wise, Frodi, in buying thy bondmaids: thou didst choose us for our strength and size but asked not our race. Bold were Hrungni and his father, and mightier Thiazi; Idi and Orni were our

ancestors, from them are we daughters of the mountain-giants sprung. . . . We maids wrought mighty deeds, we moved the mountains from their places, we rolled rocks over the court of the giants, so that the earth shook. . . . Now we are come to the king's house, meeting no mercy and held in bondage, mud beneath our feet and cold over our heads, we grind the Peace-maker. It is dreary at Frodi's."

As they sang of their wrongs by night, their mood changed, and instead of grinding peace and wealth, they ground war, fire and sword:

"Waken, Frodi! waken, Frodi! if thou wilt hear our songs. . . . I see fire burn at the east of the citadel, the voice of war awakes, the signal is given. A host will come hither in speed, and burn the hall over the king."

So the bondmaids ground on in giant-wrath, while the sea-king Mysing sailed nearer with his host, until the quern-stones split; and then the daughters of the mountain-giants spoke once more: "We have ground to our pleasure, Frodi; we maids have stood long at the mill."

A Norseman was rarely content to allow a fortunate ending to any hero, and a continuation of the story therefore makes the mill bring disaster on Mysing also. After slaying Frodi and burning his hall, he took the stones and the bondmaids on board his ship, and bade them grind salt. They ground till the weight sank the ship to the bottom of the sea, where the mill is grinding still. This is not in the song, though it has lived longer popularly

than the earlier part. Dr. Rydberg identifies Frodi with Frey, the God of fertility.

**The Everlasting Battle.**—No Eddic poem survives on the battle of the Hjathnings, the story of which is told in prose by Snorri. It must, however, be an ancient legend; and the hero Hedin belongs to one of the old Germanic heroic races, for the minstrel Deor is a dependent of the Heodenings in the Old English poem to which reference will be made later. The legend is that Hild, daughter of Högni, was carried away by Hedin the Hjathning, Hjarrandi's son. Högni pursued, and overtook them near the Orkneys. Then Hild went to her father and offered atonement from Hedin, but said also that he was quite ready to fight, and Högni need expect no mercy. Högni answered shortly, and Hild returning told Hedin that her father would accept no atonement but bade him prepare to fight. Both kings landed on an island, followed by their men. Hedin called to Högni and offered atonement and much gold, but Högni said it was too late, his sword was already drawn. They fought till evening, and then returned to their ships; but Hild went on shore and woke up all the slain by sorcery, so that the battle began again next day just as before. Every day they fight, and every night the dead are recalled to life, and so it will go on till Ragnarök.

In the German poem, *Gudrun*, the Continental version of this legend occurs in the story of the second Hilde. She is carried away by the minstrel Horant (who thus plays a more active part than the Norse Hjarrandi), as envoy from King Hettel, Hedin's German counterpart. Her father Hagen pursues, and after a battle with Hettel agrees to a reconciliation. The story is duplicated in the abduction of Hilde's daughter Gudrun, and the battle on the Wülpensand.

Another reference may probably be supplied by the much debated lines 14–16 from the Anglo-Saxon *Deor*, of which the most satisfactory translation seems to be: "Many of us have heard of the harm of Hild; the Jute's loves were unbounded, so that the care of love took from him sleep altogether." Saxo, it is true, makes Hild's father a Jute, instead of her lover, and Snorri apparently agrees with him in making Hedin Norwegian; but in the *Gudrun* Hettel is Frisian or Jutish. The Anglo-Saxon *Widsith* mentions in one line Hagena, king of the Holmrygas (a Norwegian province), and Heoden, king of the Glommas (not identified), who may be the Högni and Hedin of this tale.

The Anglo-Saxon and German agree on another point where both differ from the Norse. The Anglo-Saxon poem *Deor* is supposed to be spoken by a *scop* or court poet who has been ousted from the favour of his lord, a Heodening, by Heorrenda,

another singer: "Once I was the Heodenings' scop, dear to my lord: Deor was my name. Many a year I had a good service and a gracious lord, until the song-skilled Heorrenda received the rights which the protector of men once granted me." Like Heorrenda, Horant in the *Gudrun* is a singer in the service of the Heathnings. The Norse version keeps the name, and its connection with the Heathnings, but gives Hjarrandi, as the hero's father, no active part to play. In both points, arguing from the probable Frisian origin of the story, the Anglo-Saxon and German are more likely to have the correct form.

The legend is, like those of Walter and Hildigund, Helgi and Sigrun, founded on the primary instincts of love and war. In the Norse story of the Heathnings, however, the former element is almost eliminated. It is from no love to Hedin that Hild accompanies him, though Saxo would have it so. Nothing is clearer than that strife is her only object. It is her mediation which brings about the battle, when apparently both heroes would be quite willing to make peace; and her arts which cause the daily renewal of fighting. This island battle among dead and living is peculiar to the Norse version, and coloured by, if not originating in, the Valhalla idea: Högni and Hedin and their men are the Einherjar who fight every day and rest and feast at night, Hild is a war-goddess

The conception of her character, contrasting with the gentler part played by the Continental German heroines (who are rather the causes than the inciters of strife), can be paralleled from many of the sagas proper.

Högni's sword Dainsleif, forged by the dwarfs, as were all magic weapons, is like the sword of Angantyr, in that it claims a victim whenever it is drawn from the sheath: an idea which may easily have arisen from the prowess of any famous swordsman.

**The Sword of Angantyr.**—Like the two last legends, Angantyr's story is not represented in the Elder Edda; it is not even told by Snorri. Yet poems belonging to the cycle survive (preserved by good fortune in the late mythical *Hervarar Saga*) which among the heroic poems rank next in artistic beauty to the Helgi Lays. Since the story possesses besides a striking originality, and is connected with the name of a Pan-Germanic hero, the Ongendtheow of Old English poetry, I cannot follow the example of most editors and omit it from the heroic poems.

Like the Volsung legend it is the story of a curse; and there is a general similarity of outline, with the exception that the hero is in this case a woman. The curse-laden treasure is here the sword Tyrfing, which Svafrlami got by force from

the dwarfs. They laid a curse on it: that it should bring death to its bearer, no wound it made should be healed, and it should claim a victim whenever it was unsheathed. In the saga, the story is spread over several generations: partly, no doubt, in order to include varying versions; partly also in imitation of the true Icelandic family saga. The chief actors in the legend, beside the sword, are Angantyr and his daughter Hervör.

The earlier history of Tyrfing is told in the saga. Svafrlami is killed, with the magic weapon itself, by the viking Arngrim, who thus gains possession of it; when he is slain in his turn, it descends to Angantyr, the eldest of his twelve berserk sons. For a while no one can withstand them, but the doom overtakes them at last in the battle of Samsey against the Swedes Arrow-Odd and Hjalmar. In berserk-rage, the twelve brothers attack the Swedish ships, and slay every man except the two leaders who have landed on the island. The battle over, the berserks go ashore, and there when their fury is past, they are attacked by the two Swedish champions. Odd fights eleven of the brothers, but Hjalmar has the harder task in meeting Angantyr and his sword. All the twelve sons of Arngrim fall, and Hjalmar is mortally wounded by Tyrfing. The survivor buries his twelve foemen where they fell, and takes his comrade's body back to Sweden. The first poem gives the challenge

of the Swedish champions, and Hjalmar's dying song.

Hervör, the daughter of Angantyr, is in some respects a female counterpart of Sigurd. Like him, she is born after her father's death, and brought up in obscurity. When she learns her father's name, she goes forth without delay to claim her inheritance from the dead, even with the curse that goes with it. Here the second poem begins. On reaching the island where her father fell, she asks a shepherd to guide her to the graves of Arngrim's sons:

> "I will ask no hospitality, for I know not the islanders; tell me quickly, where are the graves called Hjörvard's howes?"

He is unwilling: "The man is foolish who comes here alone in the dark shade of night: fire is flickering, howes are opening, field and fen are aflame," and flees into the woods, but Hervör is dauntless and goes on alone. She reaches the howes, and calls on the sons of Arngrim:

> "Awake, Angantyr! Hervör calls thee, only daughter to thee and Tofa. Give me from the howe the keen sword which the dwarfs forged for Svafrlami, Hervard, Hjörvard, Hrani, Angantyr! I call you all from below the tree-roots, with helm and corselet, with sharp sword, shield and harness, and reddened spear."

Angantyr denies that the sword is in his howe: "Neither father, son, nor other kinsmen buried me; my slayers had Tyrfing;" but Hervör does

not believe him. "Tell me but truth. . . . Thou art slow to give thine only child her heritage." He tries to frighten her back to the ships by describing the sights she will see, but she only cries again, "Give me Hjalmar's slayer from the howe, Angantyr!"

A. "Hjalmar's slayer lies under my shoulders; it is all wrapped in fire; I know no maid on earth who dare take that sword in her hands."

H. "I will take the sharp sword in my hands, if I can get it: I fear no burning fire, the flame sinks as I look on it."

A. "Foolish art thou, Hervör the fearless, to rush into the fire open-eyed. I will rather give thee the sword from the howe, young maid; I cannot refuse thee."

H. "Thou dost well, son of vikings, to give me the sword from the howe. I think its possession better than to win all Norway."

Her father warns her of the curse, and the doom that the sword will bring, and she leaves the howes followed by his vain wish: "Would that I could give thee the lives of us twelve, the strength and energy that we sons of Arngrim left behind us!"

It is unnecessary here to continue the story as the saga does, working out the doom over later generations; over Hervör's son Heidrek, who forfeited his head to Odin in a riddle-contest, and over his children, another Angantyr, Hlod, and a second Hervör. The verse sources for this latter part are very corrupt.

A full discussion of the relation between the Eddic and the Continental versions of the heroic tales summarised in the foregoing pages would, of course, be far beyond the scope of this study; the utmost that can be done in that direction is to suggest a few points. Three of the stories are not concerned in this section: Helgi and Frodi are purely Scandinavian cycles; while though Angantyr is a well-known heroic name (in *Widsith* Ongendtheow is king of the Swedes), the legend attached to his name in the Norse sources does not survive elsewhere. The Weland cycle is perhaps common property. None of the versions localise it, for the names in *Völundarkvida*, Wolfdale, Myrkwood, &c., are conventional heroic place-names. It was popular at a very early date in England, and is probably a Pan-Germanic legend. The Sigurd and Hild stories, on the contrary, are both, in all versions, localised on the Continent, the former by the Rhine, the latter in Friesland or Jutland; both, therefore, in Low German country, whence they must have spread to the other Germanic lands. To England they were doubtless carried by the Low German invaders of the sixth century. On the question of their passage to the North there are wide differences of opinion. Most scholars agree that there was an earlier and a later passage, the first taking Hild, Ermanric, and the Volsung story; the second, about the twelfth or thirteenth century, the

Volsungs again, with perhaps Dietrich and Attila. But there is much disagreement as to the date of the first transmission. Müllenhoff put it as early as 600; Konrad Maurer, in the ninth and tenth centuries; while Dr. Golther is of opinion that the Volsung story passed first to the vikings in France, and then westward over Ireland to Iceland; therefore also not before the ninth century. Such evidence as is afforded by the very slight English references makes it probable that the Scandinavians had the tales later than the English, a view supported by the more highly developed form of the Norse version, and, in the case of the Volsung cycle, its greater likeness to the Continental German. The earliest Norse references which can be approximately dated are in the Skald Bragi (first half of the ninth century), who knew all three stories: the Hild and Ermanric tales he gives in outline; his only reference to the Volsungs is a kenning, "the Volsungs' drink," for serpent. With the possible exception of the Anglo-Saxon fragments, the Edda preserves on the whole the purest versions of those stories which are common to all, though, as might be expected, the Continental sources sometimes show greater originality in isolated details. These German sources have entangled the different cycles into one involved mass; but in the Norse the extraneous elements are easily detached.

The motives of heroic tales are limited in number, and more or less common to different races. Heroic cycles differ as a rule merely in their choice or combination of incidents, not in the nature of their material. The origin of these heroic motives may generally be found in primitive custom or conditions of life, seized by an imaginative people and woven into legend; sometimes linked to the name of some dead tribal hero, just as the poets of a later date wound the same traditions in still-varying combinations round the names of Gretti Asmundarson and Gold-Thori; though often the hero is, like the Gods, born of the myth. In the latter case, the story is pure myth; in the former it is legend, or a mixture of history and legend, as in the Ermanric and Dietrich tales, which have less interest for the mythologist.

The curse-bringing treasure, one of the most fruitful Germanic motives, probably has its origin in the custom of burying a dead man's possessions with him. In the *Waterdale Saga*, Ketil Raum, a viking of the eighth and early ninth centuries, reproaches his son Thorstein as a degenerate, in that he expects to inherit his father's wealth, instead of winning fortune for himself: "It used to be the custom with kings and earls, men of our kind, that they won for themselves fortune and fame; wealth was not counted as a heritage, nor would sons inherit from their fathers, but rather

lay their possessions in the howe with them." It is easy to see that when this custom came into conflict with the son's natural desire to inherit, the sacrosanctity of the dead man's treasure and of his burial-mound would be their only protection against violation. The fear of the consequences of breaking the custom took form in the myth of the curse, as in the sword of Angantyr and the Nibelungs' hoard; while the dangers attending the violation of the howe were personified in the dragon-guardian. In *Gold-Thori's Saga*, the dead berserks whose howe Thori enters, are found guarding their treasure in the shape of dragons; while Thori himself is said to have turned into a dragon after death.

Marriage with alien wives, which in the case of the Mastermaid story has been postulated as means of transmission and as the one possible explanation of its nearly universal diffusion, may perhaps with more simplicity be assumed as the common basis in custom for independently arising myths of this type. The attempts of the bride's kindred to prevent the marriage, and of the bridegroom's to undo it, would be natural incidents in such a story, and the magic powers employed by and against the bride would be the mythical representatives of the mutually unfamiliar customs of alien tribes. This theory at least offers a credible explanation of the hero's temporary oblivion of or unfaithfulness

to his protectress, after their successful escape together.

In the Valkyrie-brides, Brynhild and Sigrun, with their double attributes of fighting and wisdom, there is an evident connexion with the Germanic type of woman preserved in the allusions of Cæsar and Tacitus, which reaches its highest development in the heroines of the Edda. Any mythical or ideal conception of womanhood combines the two primitive instincts, love and fighting, even though the woman may be only the innocent cause of strife, or its passive prize. The peculiarity of the Germanic representation is that the woman is never passive, but is herself the incarnation of both instincts. Even if she is not a Valkyrie, nor taking part herself in the fight, she is ready, like the wives of the Cimbri, to drive the men back to the battle from which they have escaped. Hild and Hervör are at one extreme: war is their spiritual life. Love is in Hild nothing more than instinct; in Hervör it is not even that: she would desire nothing from marriage beyond a son to inherit the sword. At the other extreme is Sigrun, who has the warlike instinct, but is spiritually a lover as completely and essentially as Isolde or Juliet. The interest in Signy lies in the way in which she sacrifices what are usually considered the strongest feminine instincts, without, however, by any means abandoning them, to her uncompromis-

ing revenge and pride of race. Her pride in her son seems to include something of both trains of feeling; and she dies with the husband she detests, simply because he is her husband. Brynhild, lastly, is a highly modern type, as independent in love as in war. It is impossible to imagine Sigrun, or Wagner's Sieglinde, taking her revenge on a faithless lover; from no lack of spirit, but simply because revenge would have given no comfort to either. To Brynhild it is not only a distinct relief, but the only endurable end; she can forgive when she is avenged.

The other motives of these stories may be briefly enumerated. The burning of Brynhild and Signy, and Sigrun's entrance into the howe, are mythical reminiscences of widow-burial. The "sister's son" is preserved in the Sigmund and Sinfjötli tale, which also has a trace of animism in the werwolf episode. The common swanmaid motive occurs in two, the Völund story and the legend of Helgi and Kara; while the first Helgi tale suggests the Levirate in the proposed marriage of Svava to her husband's brother. The waverlowe of the Volsung myth may be traced back to the midsummer fires; the wooing of Brynhild by Sigurd's crossing the fire would thus, like the similar bridal of Menglad and Svipdag and the winning of Gerd for Frey, be based on the marriages which formed a part of agricultural rites.

# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

To avoid confusion, and in view of the customary loose usage of the word "saga," it may be as well to state that it is here used only in its technical sense of a prose history.

## VÖLUND. (Pages 5 to 8.)

Dr. Rydberg formulates a theory identifying Völund with Thiazi, the giant who carried off Idunn. It is based chiefly on arguments from names and other philological considerations, and gives perhaps undue weight to the authority of Saxo. It is difficult to see any fundamental likenesses in the stories.

The Old English references to Weland are in the *Waldere* fragment and the *Lament of Deor*. For the Franks Casket, see Professor Napier's discussion, with photographs, in the *English Miscellany* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1901). The *Thidreks Saga* (sometimes called *Vilkina Saga*), was edited by Unger (Christiania, 1853), and by Hylten-Cavallius (1880). There are two German translations: by Rassmann (*Heldensage*, 1863), and by Von der Hagen (*Nordische Heldenromane*, 1873).

## THE VOLSUNGS. (Pages 8 to 27.)

As divided in most editions the poems connected with the Volsung cycle, including the two on Ermanric, are fifteen in number:

*Gripisspa.*

*Reginsmal, Fafnismal, Sigrdrifumal,* a continued narrative compiled from different sources.

*Sigurd Fragment,* on the death of Sigurd.

*First Gudrun Lay,* on Gudrun's mourning, late.

*Short Sigurd Lay* (called *Long Brynhild Lay* in the *Corpus Poeticum;* sometimes called *Third Sigurd Lay*), style late.

*Brynhild's Hellride,* a continuation of the preceding.

*Second,* or *Old, Gudrun Lay,* is also late. It contains more kennings than are usual in Eddic poetry, and the picture of Gudrun's sojourn in Denmark and the tapestry she wrought with Thora Halfdan's daughter, together with the descriptions of her suitors, belong to a period which had a taste for colour and elaboration of detail.

*Third Gudrun Lay,* or the *Ordeal of Gudrun* (after her marriage to Atli), is romantic in character. The Gothic hero Thjodrek (Dietrich) is introduced.

*Oddrun's Lament,* in which Gunnar's death is caused by an intrigue with Atli's sister Oddrun, marks the disintegration of the Volsung legend.

The two Atli Lays (*Atlakvida* and *Atlamal,* the latter of Greenland origin), deal with the death of Gunnar and Högni, and Gudrun's vengeance on Atli.

*Gudrun's Lament* and *Hamthismal* belong to the Ermanric cycle.

### VOLSUNG PARAPHRASES. (Page 11.)

*Skaldskaparmal, Völsunga Saga* and *Norna-Gests Thattr* (containing another short paraphrase) are all included in Dr. Wilken's *Die Prosaische Edda* (Paderborn, 1878). There is an English version of *Völsunga* by Magnusson and Morris (London, 1870) and a German version of *Völsunga* and *Norna-Gest* by Edzardi.

NIBELUNGENLIED. (Page 11.)

Editions by Bartsch (Leipzig, 1895) and Zarncke (Halle, 1899); translation into modern German by Simrock.

SIGNY AND SIGGEIR. (Page 13.)

Saxo Grammaticus (Book vii.) tells the story of a Signy, daughter of Sigar, whose lover Hagbard, after slaying her brothers, wins her favour. Sigar in vengeance had him strangled on a hill in view of Signy's windows, and she set fire to her house that she might die simultaneously with her lover. The antiquity of part at least of this story is proved by the kenning "Hagbard's collar" for halter, in a poem probably of the tenth century. On the other hand, a reference in *Völsunga Saga*, that "Haki and Hagbard were great and famous men, yet Sigar carried off their sister, . . . and they were slow to vengeance," shows that there is confusion somewhere. It seems possible that Hagbard's story has been contaminated with a distorted account of the Volsung Signy, civilised as usual by Saxo, with an effect of vulgarity absent from the primitive story.

In a recently published pamphlet by Mr. W. W. Lawrence and Dr. W. H. Schofield (*The First Riddle of Cynewulf* and *Signy's Lament*. Baltimore: The Modern Language Association of America. 1902) it is suggested that the so-called First Riddle in the Exeter Book is in reality an Anglo-Saxon translation of a Norse "Complaint" spoken by the Volsung Signy. Evidence from metre and form is all in favour of this view, and the poem bears the interpretation without any straining of the meaning. Dr. Schofield's second contention, that the poem thus interpreted is evidence for the theory of a British origin for the Eddic poems, is not equally convincing. The existence in Anglo-Saxon of a translation from the Norse is no proof that any of the Eddic poems, or even the

original Norse "Signy's Lament" postulated by Dr. Schofield, were composed in the West.

It seems unnecessary to suppose, with Dr. Schofield, an influence of British legend on the Volsung story. The points in which the story of Sigmund resembles that of Arthur and differs from that of Theseus prove nothing in the face of equally strong points of correspondence between Arthur and Theseus which are absent from the Volsung story.

SINFJÖTLI'S DEATH. (Page 14.)

Münch (*Nordmœndenes Gudelœre*, Christiania, 1847) ingeniously identified the old man with Odin, come in person to conduct Sinfjötli to Valhalla, since he would otherwise have gone to Hel, not having fallen in battle; a stratagem quite in harmony with Odin's traditional character.

SIGMUND AND SINFJÖTLI. (Page 15.)

It seems probable, on the evidence of *Beowulf*, that Sigmund and Sinfjötli represent the Pan-Germanic stage of the national-hero, and Sigurd or Siegfried the Continental stage. Possibly Helgi may then be the Norse race-hero. Sigurd was certainly foreign to Scandinavia; hence the epithet Hunnish, constantly applied to him, and the localising of the legend by the Rhine. The possibility suggests itself that the Brynhild part of the story, on the other hand, is of Scandinavian origin, and thence passed to Germany. It is at least curious that the *Nibelungen Lied* places Prunhilt in Iceland.

WAGNER AND THE VOLSUNG CYCLE. (Page 26.)

Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen* is remarkable not only for the way in which it reproduces the spirit of both the Sinfjötli and the Sigurd traditions, but also for the wonderful instinct which chooses the best and most

primitive features of both Norse and Continental versions. Thus he keeps the dragon of the Norse, the Nibelungs of the German; preserves the wildness of the old Sigmund tale, and substitutes the German Hagen for his paler Norse namesake; restores the original balance between the parts of Brynhild and Gudrun; gives the latter character, and an active instead of a passive function in the story, by assigning to her her mother's share in the action; and by substituting for the slaying of the otter the bargain with the Giants for the building of Valhalla, makes the cause worthy of the catastrophe.

ERMANRIC. (Page 27.)

For examples of legend becoming attached to historical names, see Tylor's *Primitive Culture.*

THE HELGI LAYS. (Page 29.)

The Helgi Lays stand before the Volsung set in the MS.; I treat them later for the sake of greater clearness.

HELGI AND KARA. (Page 30.)

*Hromundar Saga Gripssonar*, in which this story is given, is worthless as literature, and has not been recently edited. P. E. Müller's *Sagabibliothek*, in which it was published, is out of print. Latin and Swedish translations may be found in Björner's *Nordiske Kämpa Dater* (Stockholm, 1737), also out of print.

REBIRTH. (Page 31.)

Dr. Storm has an interesting article on the Norse belief in Re-birth in the *Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi*, ix. He collects instances, and among other arguments points out the Norse custom of naming a posthumous child after its dead father as a probable relic of the belief. The inheritance of luck may perhaps be another survival; a notable

instance occurs in *Viga-Glums Saga*, where the warrior Vigfus bequeaths his luck to his favourite grandson, Glum. In the *Waterdale Saga* there are two instances in which it is stated that the luck of the dead grandfather will pass to the grandson who receives his name. Scholars do not, however, agree as to the place of the rebirth idea in the Helgi poems, some holding the view that it is an essential part of the story.

HUNDING. (Page 32.)

It is possible that the werwolf story is a totem survival. If so, the Hunding feud might easily belong to it: dogs are the natural enemies of wolves. It is curious that the Irish werwolf Cormac has a feud with MacCon (*i.e.*, Son of a Dog), which means the same as Hunding. This story, which has not been printed, will be found in the Bodleian MS. Laud, 610.

THORGERD HOLGABRUD. (Page 33.)

Told in Saxo, Book ii. Snorri has a bare allusion to it.

HOLGER DANSKE, OR OGIER LE DANOIS. (Page 33.)

See *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, vol. i. p. CXXX., and No. 10 of this series. The Norse version of the story (Helgi Thorisson) is told in the Saga of Olaf Tryggvason, and is summarised by Dr. Rydberg in the *Teutonic Mythology*, and by Mr. Nutt in the *Voyage of Bran*.

BALLADS. (Page 36.)

Professor Child is perhaps hasty in regarding the two parts of *Clerk Saunders* as independent. The first part, though unlike the Helgi story in circumstance, seems to preserve the tradition of the hero's hostility to his bride's kindred, and his death at their hands.

The Helgi story, in all its variants, is as familiar in

Danish as in Border ballads. The distribution of the material in Iceland, Denmark, England and Scotland is strongly in favour of the presumption that Scandinavian legend influenced England and Scotland, and against the presumption that the poems in question passed from the British Isles to Iceland. The evidence of the Danish ballads should be conclusive on this point. There is an English translation of the latter by R. C. A. Prior (*Ancient Danish Ballads*, London, 1860).

THE EVERLASTING BATTLE. (Page 39.)

The Skald Bragi (before 850 A.D.) has a poem on this subject, given with a translation in the *Corpus*, vol. ii. Saxo's version is in the fifth book of his History. According to Bragi, Hild has a necklace, which has caused comparison of this story with that of the Greek Eriphyle. Irish legendary history describes a similar battle in which the slain revive each night and renew the fight daily, as occurring in the wanderings of the Tuatha De Danann before they reached Ireland. According to Keating, they learnt the art of necromancy in the East, and taught it to the Danes.

The latest edition of the *Gudrun* is by Ernst Martin (second edition, Halle, 1902). There is a modern German translation by Simrock.

ANGANTYR. (Page 42.)

The poems of this cycle are four in number—(1) *Hjalmar's Death-song:* (2) *Angantyr and Hervör;* (3) *Heidrek's Riddle-Poem:* (4) *Angantyr the Younger and Hlod.* All are given in the first volume of the *Corpus*, with translations.

*Hervarar Saga* was published by Rafn (Copenhagen, 1829–30) in *Fornaldar Sögur*, vol. i., now out of print. It has been more recently edited by Dr. Bugge, together with *Völsunga* and others. Petersen (Copenhagen, 1847) edited

it with a Danish translation. Munch's *Nordmuendenes Gudelære* (out of print) contains a short abstract.

### Death of Angantyr. (Page 43.)

Angantyr's death is related by Saxo, Book v., with entire exclusion of all mythical interest.

### Transmission of Legends. (Page 47.)

Müllenhoff's views are given in the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, vol. x.; Maurer's in the *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, vol. ii. For Golther's views on the Volsung cycle see *Germania*, 33.

### The Dragon Myth. (Page 49.)

See also Hartland, *Science of Fairy-Tales*.

The eating of the dragon's heart (see p. 19) may possibly be a survival of the custom of eating a slain enemy's heart to obtain courage, of which Dr. Frazer gives examples in the *Golden Bough*.

### Alien Wives. (Page 49.)

For the theory of alien wives as a means of transmission, see Lang, *Custom and Myth* (London, 1893).

### The Sister's Son. (Page 51.)

See Mr. Gummere's article in the *English Miscellany*; and Professor Rhys' Presidential Address to the Anthropological Section of the British Association, 1900. The double relationship between Sigmund and Sinfjötli (not uncommon in heroic tales; compare Conchobhar and Cuchulainn, Arthur and Mordred) seems in this case due to the same cause as the custom which prevailed in the dynasty of the Ptolemies, where the king often married his sister, that his heir might be of the pure royal blood.

SWANMAIDS. (Page 51.)

See Hartland, *Science of Fairy-Tales.*

THE WAVERLOWE. (Page 51.)

Dr. Frazer (*Golden Bough*) gives instances of ritual marriages connected with the midsummer fires. For *Svipdag and Menglad*, see Study No. 12 of this series. If Rydberg, as seems very probable, is right in identifying Menglad and Svipdag with Freyja and the mortal lover who wins her and whom she afterwards loses, the story would be a parallel to those of Venus and Adonis, Ishtar and Tammuz, &c., which Frazer derives from the ritual marriage of human sacrifices to the Goddess of fertility. The reason given in the Edda for Brynhild's sleep, and her connexion with Odin, are secondary, arising from the Valhalla myth.

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# The Legends of
# The Holy Grail

By

Alfred Nutt

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# PREFACE

THE present study follows the lines of my previous work upon the subject: "Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail, with special reference to the hypothesis of its Celtic Origin, 1888," in so far as I first lay before the reader the *facts* in the shape of brief summaries of the romances, and then endeavour to interpret these facts in the most natural and unforced manner. Limits of space have compelled me to cite only the salient, absolutely essential facts, to disregard many secondary points on which I dwelt fully in my 1888 work, and to discard absolutely all polemic against other investigators of the Grail literature. I may say briefly that the conclusions to which I came in 1888 have, in the main, been strengthened by the subsequent course of research, in especial by the work of Miss Weston, to whom are due the most pregnant and illuminating suggestions in the field of Arthurian study during the last ten years, and whom I must thank for reading the proofs of the following pages and for many valuable remarks.

In the Bibliographical Appendix I have only cited such books and articles as have appeared since 1888, with which the serious student of the cycle needs to make himself acquainted. For Grail literature prior to 1888 I refer, in so far as it is not cited in the Appendix, to my previous work.

ALFRED NUTT.

# THE HOLY GRAIL

In Number 1 of these studies I sketched the historical and social conditions which determined the great outburst of romantic literature in the twelfth century. In Number 4 Miss Weston enumerated the chief themes and incidents, the combination of which makes up the Arthurian cycle, the most prominent and characteristic example of the mediæval romantic spirit. One section of the Arthurian cycle, that which comprises a number of stories describing the search after, and the history of, a mysterious object known as the Grail, or the Holy Grail, she left on one side. Although now inextricably bound up with the Arthur legend as a whole, the connection is late and secondary. In part, at least, the Grail stories were originally independent of the Arthur cycle, and they present a series of problems differing, in a marked degree, from those involved in the consideration of the other Arthurian romances, and necessitating separate investigation.

Much unnecessary mystery has accumulated around the Grail stories, and they have become

the happy hunting ground of mystical enthusiasts. There are good reasons why this should be so. In the first place, whatever be the interpretation placed upon a certain sequence of incidents which recurs repeatedly and in varying forms in these stories, it undoubtedly described from the first a search for wonder-working talismans, the possession of which constituted, in a measure, a *summum bonum;* in the second, this fact was apparent to several mediæval writers who have left us their version of the Grail quest, expressed in the terms of mediæval Christian mysticism; thirdly, and this is perhaps the chief reason, several of the Grail stories, and notably one of the oldest and most important, have come down to us in an unfinished or fragmentary form. We cannot be sure how this or that writer conceived the story as a whole, or in what sense he figured the Grail to himself.

Thus we have the primary and essential element of mystery inherent in every story which sets forth a quest for that which transcends the ordinary conditions of human life; we have the secondary, but also essential, element of mediæval mystical interpretation; finally, we have the purely accidental element of fragmentary and enigmatic presentation. It is not surprising if, under these circumstances, so much nonsense has been written about the Grail.

The chief cause which has led many able, learned,

and ingenious men to spin idle theories deserves a moment's consideration. In the immense and confused mass of the Grail romances some particular fact or set of facts has been picked out, isolated from its setting, and interpreted without reference to the romances as a whole. The only way to avoid this error is to survey, however briefly, all the essential facts, and to arrange them in the order of their development. To understand how these stories came to assume their present shape is to be near understanding what they originally meant.

The Grail romances, of which I propose to enumerate, succinctly but sufficiently, the leading themes, incidents, and sequences of incident, may be divided into two main classes. In the first, the chief stress is laid upon the adventures connected with the quest for certain talismans, of which the Grail is only one, and upon the personality of the hero who achieves the quest; in the second, upon the nature and history of these talismans. The first may be styled the Quest, the second the Early History versions; but these designations must not be taken as implying that either class is solely concerned with one aspect of the legend.

### First Class: Quest Versions.

Chief among these is the vast poetic compilation known as the *Conte del Graal*. This mass of

over 60,000 verses came into existence between 1180 and 1235, or 1240, but we can only date with any accuracy the section which extends from v. 1283 to v. 10,601, and is the work of the most celebrated French poet of the twelfth century, Crestien de Troies, who began to write about 1150, has left a number of romances, mostly belonging to the Arthur cycle, and who died about 1181. He himself states that he took the story from a book given him by a Count Philip of Flanders, who died, Crusading, in 1191, after having been Regent of France in 1180–81.

**Conte del Graal: Crestien.**—Perceval is brought up by his mother in the forest to which she has retired. Purposely kept in ignorance of all that relates to chivalry and warfare, he one day meets and questions a band of passing knights. Neither the warnings nor the entreaties of his mother avail to prevent his following them to Arthur's court. Thence, after adventures which foreshadow his future eminence in knighthood, he rides forth in search of further adventures. He is welcomed and trained in all manner of knightly exercises by Gonemans, who, amid other recommendations, bids him avoid over-readiness in speaking and asking questions. Leaving Gonemans, he succours an oppressed damsel, Blanchefleur (Gonemans' niece), with whom he stays

awhile. Again he roves forth, chances upon two fishermen, and is directed for a night's lodging to a castle hard by. Entering, he is led into a great hall wherein is a couch and upon it an old man. A squire enters bearing a sword upon which is written that it will never break save in sore peril. The host gives it to Perceval, "to whom it was adjudged and destined." Another squire enters bearing a lance from which blood drips. Perceval would have asked concerning this wonder, but minds him of the counsel not to speak or inquire too much. Two more squires enter, each with a two-branched candlestick, and a damsel, in her hand a "graal"; this shines and puts out the light of the candles as the sun does that of the stars. A second damsel follows holding a silver plate. At supper the "graal" is again brought, but Perceval does not venture to ask wherefor it is used. On the morrow, awakening, he finds the castle deserted, his horse saddled, and the drawbridge down. He rides forth, and the drawbridge closes so suddenly as well-nigh to crush horse and rider. In the forest he meets a damsel lamenting over a dead knight. She tells him his last night's host was the fisherman who had directed him to the castle; wounded by a spear thrust through both thighs his only solace was in fishing, whence he was called the Fisher King. She asks if Perceval

had seen the bleeding lance, the "graal," the silver dish—had he asked their meaning? No! then what was his name? Perceval le Gallois! Nay, rather Perceval the Caitiff, for had he asked concerning what he saw, the good king would have been made whole again. She is Perceval's cousin. After many adventures Perceval returns to Arthur's court. The following day a damsel, more hideous than could be pictured outside hell, appears, and curses Perceval for omitting to ask concerning lance and grail; had he done so the king would have been healed of his wound and ruled his land in peace; now maidens will be put to shame, orphans and widows made, many knights slain. She further tells of adventures to be achieved at the Castle Orgellous, and of Montesclaire where a damsel is held captive. Gauvain (Sir Gawain) will forth to the imprisoned damsel, Giflès to the Castle Orgellous, Perceval to learn concerning Grail and lance. Nothing is said of Giflès' adventures, but those of Gauvain are related at great length. Of Perceval we learn that after wandering five years without thinking of God, he meets on Good Friday a band of penitents, is rebuked for riding armed on such a day, and is bidden to confess to a hermit hard by, who turns out to be his uncle: Perceval has sinned in leaving his mother and thereby causing her

death, and for this reason could not ask concerning lance and grail. The story returns to Gauvain, in the midst of whose adventures it breaks off.

Crestien tells us, then, of a precious object, the "graal," preserved in company with other talismans, a bleeding lance, a broken sword, in a mysterious castle; of a hero who visits this castle; who should have asked concerning its wonders; refrains from so doing, and thereby draws down upon his head bitter reproaches and long wanderings. Had he finished his poem he would, doubtless, have told us exactly what the "graal" was, why it and the lance were precious, and the nature of the relation between the hero and the wounded fisher king. As it is, we must turn for this information elsewhere, and we cannot be sure that what we find corresponds to Crestien's plan.

**Conte del Graal: the Continuators of Crestien.**—Several continuations exist which, from the vague indications yielded by their authors, may be dated between 1190 and 1240. It is noteworthy that Gauvain's adventures fill nearly as much space as do those of Perceval himself; he, too, is brought to a castle, in which a dead knight lies on a bier; lance and sword and Grail appear; Gauvain asks concerning these objects, but falls asleep in the midst of

his host's recital. On the morrow he wakes on the sea strand, finds the country-side, heretofore desert, bursting into blossom, and is at once blessed and banned by the country folk, blessed for having partly delivered the land from its curse, banned for not having wholly succeeded. This adventure occurs in the first continuation, due to a certain GAUTIER, who relates many adventures of Perceval, which seem to have no connection with Grail and lance. Thus he has an *amour* with a Water-fay, inmate of a castle in which is a magic chess-board which plays by itself against the hero ('tis a work of *Morghe la Fée*); she sends him in pursuit of a stag which he slays, but is deprived of the fruit of his success by a "maid of ill chance." He comes again to the Fisher King, asks the necessary questions, and is then given the broken sword to weld together, a task to be accomplished by none save a lover of God and of His spouse, Holy Church. He succeeds save for one little crack, is embraced by the Fisher King, and hailed lord of his house. In another continuation, that of MANESSIER, Perceval achieves the adventure of the castle by slaying Partinaus of the Red Tower, nephew of Espinogre, who had treacherously slain Goon Desert, the Fisher King's brother, in revenge for his uncle's death. The sword with which the foul blow was struck

broke, and the pieces might only be rejoined by the destined avenger; in handling them the Fisher King was wounded. On seeing Partinaus' head the king leaps to his feet, is straightway made whole, hails Perceval as his nephew, and is succeeded by the latter at his death. In yet another continuation, that of GERBERT, stress is laid upon Perceval's forsaking Blanchefleur, whom, after avenging her uncle Gornumant upon a hideous witch, he rejoins and marries (being assured in a dream that of his seed shall be the Swan Knight and the Deliverer of the Holy Sepulchre), comes again to the Fisher King's castle and pieces together the sword.

In addition to these varying statements concerning Perceval's achievement of the task laid upon him by the hideous damsel, the continuations to Crestien (some 50,000 lines in all) yield several accounts concerning the nature, origin, and history of the Grail and lance. Before discussing these we must first examine a German, a Welsh, and an English romance, the contents of which are closely allied to Crestien's poem, and, in part, to the continuations.

**The Parzival of Wolfram von Eschenbach.** —This is a metrical romance, written certainly not later than 1215, as Wolfram died about 1220, and wrote his *William of Orange* after the *Parzival.*

Wolfram claims to follow a French poem by a certain Kiot (*i.e.*, Guiot). Crestien's poem is mentioned, but disparagingly:

The hero's father, Gahmuret, son of Gandin of Anjou, goes to the East, wins the love of a heathen queen, Belakane, whom, after a while, he leaves to go back to his own country, and who in his absence bears a son, Feirefiz. Gahmuret meanwhile has married Herzeloyde; returning to the East he is slain in battle. [Here begins the portion of the poem which agrees with that of Crestien, the chief differences being as follows]: The more important position assigned to Parzival's cousin; the far greater prominence of the Grail, described as a stone yielding all manner of food and drink; its power sustained by a dove which every Good Friday lays a Host upon it; given after the fall of the rebel angels to Titurel and his dynasty; preserved by them in the Grail castle, Monsalvatch, and guarded by a sacred order of knights, the Templeisen, whom it chooses itself. These knights are vowed to virginity, their king alone being allowed marriage, and his incurable wound is due to his having taken up arms in the cause of worldly and unlawful love. The question Parzival should have put to him is, "What aileth thee, uncle?"

When he leaves the castle after the first visit he is mocked at by the inmates for having omitted the question. More stress is laid upon the broken sword, connected with which is a magic spell, to be mastered before Parzival can become master of the Grail castle. In the interview with the hermit uncle Parzival is strongly urged to return to his wife Condwiramur [Crestien's Blanchefleur]. Gauvain's adventures are far more closely connected with the story of the chief hero than is the case in Crestien, though this may be due to the latter's poem breaking off in their midst. In the concluding portion of the work, to which nothing corresponds in Crestien, Parzival fights, unknowing, against his half-brother, Feirefiz, the fight being stopped by mutual recognition. The hideous damsel reappears, and bids Parzival to the Grail castle, where he is rejoined by wife and two sons; Feirefiz is baptized, weds the damsel who has care of the Grail, returns to the East, and is the father of Prester John. Parzival rules over the Grail kingdom, and his son, Loherangrain, is Knight of the Swan.

In comparing Wolfram with Crestien several points are worthy close attention. The Crusading tone of the introductory history of the hero's father is noticeable in connection with the fact that the

order of Grail knights is obviously intended to suggest the great Crusading Order of the Knights Templar. As the whole of this part of the work is connected with a genealogical legend of the Angevin princes (our English Plantagenets), and betrays Southern French affinities in the personal and place-names, which differ greatly from those in Crestien, it is impossible that it can be the invention of the German poet, who must, in these particulars at least, be following a French source, which, again, must have been very different from Crestien. Once admit the existence of this French source and it seems simpler to refer to it the very important difference between the presentment of the Grail in the two works rather than to attribute it to Wolfram. With Crestien the Grail is distinctly a vessel, with Wolfram a stone; the former insists little, the latter much, upon its food giving properties. In Crestien, the Fisher King's wound has no moral justification; in Wolfram, it is the punishment of the king's sin in breaking his vow. In Crestien, the question relates to the nature of the talisman and the use to which it is put; in Wolfram, primarily to the sufferer from the effects of sin, secondarily to the hero who can only attain full perfection by sympathetic compassion with the suffering caused by sin. This deepened and intensified spiritual interpretation of the incident cannot be disassociated from the Crusading framework and the

modelling of the Grail knighthood upon that of the Temple.

**Peredur, the son of Evrawc.**—This is a Welsh romance, known to us from MSS. of the thirteenth century:

The earlier portion corresponds closely in sequence and general character of the incidents with Crestien's poem. But there is marked difference in the scene at the Fisher King's castle. What Peredur sees is first, a lance dripping blood, then a salver in which is a man's head swimming in blood; nothing answers to the Grail. After this adventure the Welsh tale, whilst agreeing generally with Crestien, has special features. Thus Peredur defends a castle against the Sorceresses of Gloucester, one of whom hails him as their destined overcomer, yet from whom he learns chivalry and the use of arms. There is also a large section (nearly one third of the tale) to which nothing answers either in Crestien or in any extant French work. In the latter part of the tale, after the appearance of the hideous damsel, the Welsh, whilst offering to a large extent the same sequence of incidents as in Crestien and Gautier, relates them in a far more coherent and intelligible manner. For the tale closes with the appearance of a youth who reveals himself as Peredur's

cousin—he it was had borne the bloody head in the salver; he, in the guise of the hideous damsel, had incited Peredur to continue the quest; he had intervened in the chess-board and stag-hunt adventures to aid and incite Peredur, his object being that Peredur should avenge upon the Sorceresses of Gloucester the death of the cousin whose head was carried in the salver, and the laming of the uncle.

The Welsh tale is thus in a large measure a logical and straightforward version of a hero's vengeance upon supernatural beings for the injuries inflicted by them upon his kindred. As is frequently the case, these supernatural beings know that they must ultimately succumb, and are indeed constrained to furnish means for their own undoing; as is again frequently the case, the hero is passive, almost a dummy, the real protagonist being one of the injured kinsmen. Had we the story in a purer form we should find that the injury, so far as he is concerned, consists in the enchantment of hideous and unsexing disguise, an enchantment from which the consummation of the vengeance can alone free him. The object of the talismans is here to remind the hero of the wrong done and to supply the avenging weapon. *Peredur*, it will be seen, is like Manessier in being a vengeance story pure and simple, and like the Gawain visit to the Grail castle

in Gautier, in so far as the head on the salver in the one case answers to the knight on the bier in the other.

**Sir Percyvelle.**—An English metrical romance found in the Thornton MS., written shortly before the middle of the fifteenth century; to judge by the language the romance in its extant form cannot be much older than the date of transcription.

The opening incidents are similar to those in Crestien and the Welsh *Peredur*, but with this difference: in all three the hero's first adventure after reaching Arthur's court is to slay a knight who had offered grievous insult either to Arthur or to his queen; in Crestien and in the Welsh tale little stress is laid upon this incident, but in the English romance it supplies the backbone of the story (in Wolfram, too, the incident is more emphasised than in Crestien). This knight, known as the Red Knight, had slain Percyvelle's father and been foredoomed to perish at the hands of the avenging son; moreover, he has a witch mother who, later, encounters the hero and is slain by him, and he has persecuted with his enmity Percyvelle's uncle and cousins. The remainder of the story is taken up by an incident corresponding to Perceval's deliverance of Blanchefleur in Crestien, and to Percyvelle's rejoining

his mother, who, thinking he was dead, had lost her senses. He ultimately goes to the Holy Land and there dies.

The English romance contains nothing corresponding to the visits to the first uncle (Gonemans) or to the Fisher King, and makes no mention of the Grail or of any other talisman. It is a simple and straightforward version of a widely-spread tale of a son's vengeance upon his father's slayers. But for the final touch of the hero's going to the Holy Land there is no suggestion of religious colouring.

Before discussing the statements made by the continuations of Crestien respecting the origin and nature of the Grail and other talismans beheld by the hero at the Fisher King's castle, it is advisable to sum up the evidence on this point already laid before the reader. One French version (Crestien) speaks of a sword, a bleeding lance, and a Grail (a vessel); another (if Wolfram's poem be regarded as representing a lost French original) of sword and lance and Grail (a stone); the Welsh tale mentions a bleeding lance and a head in a salver; the English romance is silent concerning any talisman. In three versions (*Conte del Graal*, Wolfram, and *Peredur*), the talismans are in some way connected with a hero's restoration to health of a kinsman. From Crestien we can only surmise

how or why this happens, but learn from one of his continuators (Manessier) that it is an effect of successful vengeance; this is also the case in *Peredur*, whilst in *Sir Percyvelle* there is also an injury avenged. In Wolfram, on the other hand, the idea of vengeance is absent; the injured kinsman, suffering from the effects of his own sin, is relieved when the hero rises to such a height of spiritual insight as enables him to understand and sympathise with the sin-caused suffering. In the Welsh story alone, is the machinery by which the vengeance is effected (talismans and transformed kinsman), used in a reasonable and intelligible way. We further note that the scene of all these versions is laid in Britain, and that the personages are almost exclusively British, the exceptions being found in Wolfram, where they are mostly Angevin or Breton.

We may now turn to the accounts concerning the nature and origin of the Grail and other talismans to be found in the *Conte del Graal*. There are several, differing in detail, but agreeing substantially, that the Grail is the dish (of the Last Supper) in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood of the Saviour as He hung upon the Cross, and the lance the one wherewith Christ's body was pierced. Joseph was cast into prison, miraculously delivered, and, exiled in company with the sister of Nicodemus (Veronica), who had

an image of the Lord, passed into Britain, the promised land, with a large following. When short of food Joseph prayed for the Grail in which had been gathered the holy blood; it was sent, and the company had bread and wine and meat in plenty. After Joseph's death the Grail passed into the keeping of his kin, from whom both Perceval's father and the Fisher King were descended. In another account Joseph is sustained whilst in captivity by the Grail; when released he has adventures with a heathen king, Evelach, and his brother-in-law, Seraphe, whom he converts and re-names Mordrains and Nasciens. Yet another account duplicates Joseph's captivity after his arrival in England, and the Fisher King is duplicated by Evelach-Mordrains, wounded for presumption in approaching too near the Grail, and miraculously kept alive to be healed by the best of all knights of Joseph's kin.

These various accounts are found in what are plainly the latest portions of the vast compilation known as the *Conte del Graal*, and in several cases their disagreement with the context stamps them as interpolations.

In asking ourselves if these statements faithfully represent that description of the Grail and allied talismans, which we must assume to have been in Crestien's source and which he would have reproduced had he finished his poem, we cannot

fail to note the grave and essential discrepancies between the different portions of the legend taken as a whole. Why, if the Grail talismans are of such surpassing sanctity, is the use to which they are put so apparently profane? Did Christ send forth Holy Vessel and lance to Britain merely that Perceval might heal his kinsman and succeed him in his kingship, or Gauvain restore a waste land to fertility, or that the dwellers in the Grail Castle might feed on the fat of the land? Again, is it not significant that the very portion of the *Conte del Graal* (Manessier's), which dwells most lengthily upon the sacred Christian nature of the talismans, is also that which pictures Perceval's conduct in as distinctly non-Christian a light as in the *Peredur* or *Sir Percyvelle?* And how, if the whole story started from the sacred nature of the talismans, hallowed by their association with the Passion, came the Welsh and English romances to discard these sacred associations, to omit the most sacred of the precious objects, and to substitute a story of blood feud and vengeance unmarked by any trace of spiritual, let alone specifically Christian, feeling? Finally, why does the one version, Wolfram's, which is animated by deep and lofty spiritual feeling, *not* represent the Grail as the receptacle of Christ's blood?

These questions suggest the answer that the Christian legendary statements about the Grail

talismans are really secondary, and intended to explain the importance attached to them in the story of their quest. But before accepting this answer as correct we must note that Christian symbolism of some sort is involved in *all* the quest stories. Thus alike in Crestien, Wolfram, and the *Peredur* is found the Good Friday incident: the hero having wandered long and far and lost count of days and seasons, is met on Good Friday by a knight who rebukes him for riding armed on such a day, and bids him to confession and absolution. In Wolfram, too, the machinery by which the miraculous virtue of the Grail is sustained is distinctively Christian and connected with Good Friday.

Two elements thus seem to be present, a definitely Christian and a possibly non-Christian one, and although the Christian element in one form appears late and secondary, yet in some shape or other it is present in the very oldest versions of the story as a whole.

One thing we could safely postulate, namely, that the distinctively Christian element traceable in the *Conte del Graal* must exist somewhere else in a more coherent and rational form. In effect, two versions of such a form exist: a prose romance, known as the *Grand St. Graal*, of unknown authorship, and a metrical trilogy, due to a certain Robert de Borron, of which only the first two portions, *Joseph of Arimathea* and *Merlin*, are extant.

SECOND CLASS OF VERSIONS: EARLY HISTORY OF THE GRAIL.

**Robert de Borron: Joseph of Arimathea, Merlin.**—Borron's poem is dedicated to a Walter, Count of Montbéliard, a famous Crusader, who became Regent of Cyprus and Constable of Jerusalem; he died in 1212, and is not likely to have been in a position to act as patron before 1170, so that these dates may be taken as limits for the writing of Borron's romances.

Christ's Passion is described, and how Joseph, having obtained the Lord's body, washes it and collects the blood in a vessel. In their anger the Jews cast him into a prison, where he is visited by Christ, who gives him the precious vessel containing His holiest blood and confides secret words to him: Joseph is to yield the vessel to three persons only, who are to take it in the name of the Trinity; he is further instructed concerning the Sacrament and how he is to celebrate it. Years pass and Joseph remains in prison until released by Vespasian. He then converts many, among them his sister Enygeus and her husband Brons (or Hebron). Sorrow falls upon the Christian community through indulgence in carnal sin. Joseph kneels before the vessel, weeps, and asks wherefor his people suffer. He is bidden prepare a table in memory

of the one whereat Christ ate the Last Supper. At that table an empty seat is to be left, which may not be filled until a son is born to Brons and Enygeus; a sinner who attempts to occupy it is swallowed by the earth; a divine voice then tells Joseph that not Brons' son but his grandson shall fill the seat. Brons is to catch a fish and place it on the table by the vessel; by this means the sinners are detected, and the vessel is called "Graal," as being agreeable to those who behold it. In time Brons and Enygeus have twelve sons; Joseph, praying before the vessel, announces that eleven will marry and one, Alain, remain single. But almost immediately Joseph is bidden tell Alain all about the vessel, and how from him there shall issue an heir who is to keep it; Alain is to lead his brethren westwards. This he does. Another of the company, Petrus, is also commanded by the voice to go to the Vale of Avaron. Joseph is further told that Brons is to keep the vessel after his (Joseph's) death, and is bidden instruct him in the Holy Words God spake in the prison. Brons is to be known as the Rich Fisher, from the fish he caught; he is to wait for his son's son and to give him the vessel when the meaning of the Blessed Trinity shall be known. After seeing Brons put in possession of Grail and headship Petrus departs, followed after three days by Brons,

Joseph remaining in the land in which he was born.

The *Merlin* follows immediately, in substantial agreement with the other Merlin romances up to Arthur's withdrawal of the sword from the anvil, where the author stops, with the remark that he can no longer speak of Arthur until he has told of Alain, son of Brons, what manner of man he was, of his kin, and of how the woes of Britain were caused.

It should be noted that Borron's poem, in the Joseph portion at least, is obviously abridged, and, possibly, altered in parts by a maladroit editor. What gives colour to this surmise is that, in addition to the original metrical form, there exist several prose versions, in which occur a number of interpolations designed to bring the text into conformity with later developments of the legend. Some such process may already have begun before the poem was turned into prose, and to it may be due discrepancies such as that Alain, vowed to celibacy in one line is married almost in the next, or that now Brons' son, now his grandson, is to achieve the venture of the empty seat, and, presumably, to be the Grail-keeper, or that, apparently, two different accounts of the Grail's arrival in Britain, in the one case in Alain's, in the other in Brons' guardianship, have been confused. It

is, however, possible that these discrepancies are due to Borron himself, and are the result of an unskilful contamination of two forms of the legend.

In spite of these discrepancies, it is noteworthy that, with the exception of Wolfram's *Parzival*, Borron's poem is the only work of the cycle which is not only animated by a Christian symbolic conception (as are several other romances), but which carries out that conception in an intelligible manner by means of the incidents of the story. This conception may be briefly summarised as follows: Sin, the cause of want among the people; separation of pure and impure by means of the fish (symbol of Christ); punishment of the self-willed false disciple; reward of Brons by charge of the Grail; symbolising of the Trinity by the three tables and the three Grail-keepers.

In view of the skill with which the conception is worked out, it seems more reasonable to attribute the above noted discrepancies to the existence of an earlier form of the legend in which there were only two Grail-keepers, father and son, or uncle and nephew, traces of which have persisted in Borron's version.

**The Grand St. Graal.**—The romance thus entitled is one of the longest and latest of the cycle. Allusion to an episode contained in it, and

it alone, is made in the chronicle of a certain Helinandus, assigned to a date prior to the year 1204, and this has been held by some scholars to enable the dating of the romance. But the argument is doubtful, firstly, on account of the extremely composite nature of the Grand St. Graal in its present form, and, secondly, because the dating of the passage in Helinandus' Chronicle is by no means sure.

The romance opens with a prologue in which the authorship is boldly ascribed to Christ Himself. It then tells of Joseph of Arimathea, who, believing in Christ and desiring to possess somewhat belonging to Him, carries off the dish of the Last Supper, and, having begged Christ's body from Pilate, uses the dish to collect the blood flowing therefrom before he places it in the sepulchre. He is imprisoned, but comforted by Christ and fed from the holy dish. Delivered by Vespasian, baptized by St. Philip, he converts seventy-five of his kin and friends, and, at the Lord's command, makes an ark for the dish. The company, miraculously fed thereby in its journey through the wilderness, reaches Sarras. Here Joseph and his son, Josephes, aid and convert Evelach. Josephes is instructed by Christ how to perform the Sacrament, and is made sovran shepherd over the new sheep. When the

dish is first shown to Evelach's brother-in-law (who receives the name Nasciens at baptism) he says it pleases him (*li grée*) entirely, hence it is called *Gréal*. Josephes, wounded by a lance, and Nasciens blinded for approaching too near the Grail, are both healed by an angel, the lance head being preserved: it shall drop blood at the beginning of the Wonders of the Holy Grail and the Lance, and but one man should behold those marvels of the Grail, and but one other be struck by the lance, and he should be the last of Josephes' kin, and his healer, the achiever of the Grail wonders, should be the last of Nasciens' kin. Divers adventures of Evelach (baptized Mordrains) and Nasciens follow, and visions to Nasciens concerning his descendants ("all these wonders are true, as Christ Himself wrote the book of the Holy Grail, and, save it, naught else but the Lord's Prayer and the judgment on the woman taken in adultery"). Nasciens finds Solomon's sword and is wounded by it. The story returns to Josephes, who leads a choice company to Great Britain. Here they find Nasciens' son, Celidoine. Joseph and Josephes are imprisoned by King Crudel of North Wales, but delivered by Mordrains, to whom our Lord appears in the likeness of one crucified, bidding him go to Britain. Mordrains retires to a hermitage, building a monastery for white monks,

and stays there until Perceval and Galahad see him, as is told in the tale of the Holy Grail. We then hear of Brons, who up to now has not been mentioned; he brings his twelve sons to Josephes, eleven are married, and the twelfth having chosen virginity is appointed guardian of the Grail at Josephes' death. Alain's fishing is described, and how, having caught a fish which suffices to feed all the company, he is called the Rich Fisher, a title borne after him by all the Grail keepers. We are also told of Petrus, who converts and marries a heathen princess, and from whom descends Lot of Orcanie, father of Gauvain. Also of Galahad, Joseph's son, whom the men of Hocelice take as their king, and who is ancestor to Ywain, son of Urien. Joseph and Josephes die and the latter confides the Grail to Alain. A lordly castle hight Corbenic ("Holy Vessel in Chaldee"), is built for it. For sleeping in such a holy place a king is wounded through both thighs. At Alain's death his brother Josue becomes Grail keeper, and after him six kings, the last of them Pelles, on whose daughter Lancelot of the Lake begets Galahad, Lancelot being, himself, eighth in descent from Celidoine, son of Nasciens.

There exist three romances which are concerned with the Quest of the Grail, but, neverthe-

less, must be reckoned among the two Early History versions just summarised, with which they are closely connected. One of the three, known as the *Quête del St. Graal*, was for long the most famous work of the cycle, and is still the one best known to Englishmen, as it was embodied, almost entire, by Malory in the *Morte Darthur*. Malory's work being generally accessible, the story need only be given briefly.

**Quête del St. Graal.**—It tells of Lancelot's son, Galahad, coming to Arthur's court, of his achieving the adventure of the Siege Perillous and the sword in the block; of the appearance of the Holy Grail, which fills each beholder with meat such as he longs for; of Gauvain's vow to go in quest of it for a year and a day, which the other knights of the Round Table join in. The adventures which befall Galahad and the other questers are for the most part such as are foretold in the Grand St. Graal, and mostly exemplify the sin of carnal love, and the ascetic virtue of Galahad. One, however, assigned to Lancelot, is not mentioned in that romance: Lancelot finds a wounded knight seeking solace from the Holy Vessel, the Grail appears, but Lancelot says never a word, for which aftertimes much mischance was his; when he awakes he is bitterly reproached.

Perceval finds Mordrains kept alive, having fed on naught but the Lord's body for 400 years, and waiting the arrival of the good knight. Lancelot comes to Castle Corbenic, but is struck insensible and powerless for many days for approaching too near the Holy Vessel. Galahad, Perceval, and Bors ultimately come to Castle Corbenic, where they are joined by nine (or ten) other knights; Josephes appears and celebrates the Sacrament for the whole company. Christ makes Himself visible to Galahad and bids him to Sarras whither the Grail is to depart, Britain being unworthy of it; but first he is to heal the maimed king. The three then go on Solomon's ship, are thrown into prison and there fed by the Holy Grail; a final revelation is followed by the death of Galahad, followed after a year by that of Perceval, who is buried in the same grave. Bors returns to Britain and tells the adventures of the Holy Grail, which are written down and kept in the Abbey of Salisbury, whence Walter Map drew them to make his book for the love of King Henry.

The second romance is almost the least known work of the cycle. It derives the name under which it is commonly known (the *Didot Perceval*), from the fact that the solitary MS. in which it is

found belonged to the well-known collector, A. F. Didot. This MS. also contains prose versions of Borron's two poems, *Joseph of Arimathea* and *Merlin*, and it is natural, at first blush, to take the *Didot Perceval* for a prose rendering of the otherwise lost conclusion of Borron's trilogy. But this, as we shall see, is certainly not the case.

**Didot Perceval.**—The story opens with Merlin's account of how he made the Round Table, our Lord having made the first, Joseph the second, he (Merlin) the third. He also tells of the Rich Fisher King who is old and full of infirmities, and may not be healed until a good knight comes to ask of what use is the Grail. The story turns then to Perceval, son of Alein le Gros, whom, when dying, the Holy Ghost directs to send his son to Arthur's court. He achieves, though with difficulty, the venture of the Perillous Seat, learns about Rich Fisher and Grail, and vows to quest for them. Many knights make the same vow. Perceval then has a number of adventures similar to those in Gautier's section of the Conte del Graal, notably those at the Chess-board castle and the Stag Hunt. He then comes to the Fisher King's castle, sees lance and silver plate and a vessel in which was our Lord's blood. He had fain asked, but fears to displease the king, minding him of

the injunction laid upon him not to be over curious, for a man of idle words is displeasing to the Lord. In the morning all the inmates of the castle have disappeared, and on riding forth he is reviled. After further adventures the Good Friday incident occurs ("the songmen in their pleasing rhymes say nothing of this," asserts the writer!). Merlin then appears, urges Perceval to go again to his grandfather; he does so, asks the question, the king is cured, and the enchantments of Britain cease. Perceval is instructed concerning lance (the one wherewith Longis pierced Christ's side) and Grail (the vessel in which Joseph caught Christ's blood as it flowed to the ground), so called because it is agreeable to worthy men. The Holy Ghost bids Brons teach the secret words our Lord on the Cross told Joseph; he does so, but the writer cannot, and may not, say what they were. Brons is carried off by angels and Perceval remains.

Comparison of this romance with Borron's undoubted work shows that they cannot be by the same man. Borron's capacity for working out a spiritual conception has already been noted. It is certain that he did not intend to represent either Brons or Alain as subject to a mysterious curse, from which son or grandson was to free them. He did, on the other hand, intend the visit of the

"third man" to exemplify certain spiritual dogmas, and that this should be worked out through certain personages and certain incidents which are specified. Now the *Didot Perceval* lays almost as much stress as the *Conte del Graal* upon the mysterious malady of the Fisher King, but it does not exemplify the spiritual dogmas insisted upon by Borron, and it neglects or misunderstands the incidents to which he intended to pay special attention. It is, in fact, an incongrous jumble of hints from Borron's work, and a confused version of the *Conte del Graal*. Its intention, which is undoubted, to be a sequel to Borron's poems, makes it almost certain that he never completed his trilogy.

**Perceval le Gallois.**—The third romance will be known to many English readers, thanks to Dr. Sebastian Evans' exquisite English version, styled the *High History of the Holy Grail*. It is also known as the *Perlesvaus*, but it will be convenient to designate it by the title given it by its first editor, M. Ch. Potvin, *Perceval le Gallois*. It is in prose, and was written for a certain John, Lord of Nesle in Flanders, who was living in the year 1225.

Of all the Quest romances this is the most confused and aimless. It professes to be written by Josephus at the bidding of an angel. It tells of the good knight descended by his mother

from Joseph d'Abarimacie, who kept the lance wherewith Christ was pierced, and the Holiest Vessel in which His blood was gathered. On his father's side the good knight was descended from Nicodemus; his mother's brother was the Fisher King, King Pelles, and the King of Castle Deadly. In his youth he came to the Court of the Rich Fisher, but omitted to ask whom one served with the Holiest Grail, whence wars ensued and the King fell into sickness. Afterwards both Gawain and Lancelot came to the Grail Castle. Gawain first to the Castle of Enquiry, where the sword is preserved wherewith John the Baptist was beheaded. Gawain is silent in the Grail Castle, where he beholds Grail and lance. Lancelot may not see the Grail on account of his sinful love to Guinevere. The Fisher King dies, and his land is seized by his brother, King of Castle Deadly, who is a heathen; Perceval's struggle against him, his victory and winning of the Grail Castle are told at great length. He is visited by Arthur, Lancelot, and Gawain. Arthur beholds the five mysterious transformations of the Grail, 'about which may no man speak, for the secrets of the sacrament shall no man disclose save God give him power thereto.' The story does not end here, but tells of many other adventures of Perceval, who finally sails away on a ship with white sail on which is figured a red

lion, 'never has man learnt what became of him.' This story, written in Latin (from which it was translated into French), was found in the island Avallon, in a holy house of God on the shores of the Moor adventurous, where Arthur and Guinevere are buried.

A special feature of this romance is the insistence upon Perceval's virginity. It is as marked a feature in his case as is that of Galahad in the *Quête.*

The difference in tone and sentiment between these romances and those of the first class is so marked as to make the reader feel he has been transported to another world. The chivalric is here subordinated to the Christian ascetic element. True, the hero's prowess is insisted upon in set conventional terms, but the centre of interest is shifted from his personality and from the feats and ventures by which it is manifested to the symbolic machinery of the precious vessel and its accompaniments. Contrast the two romances in which the spiritual element avowedly dominates: Wolfram's *Parzival* and the *Quête del St. Graal.* In the former the personalty of the hero is the main thing; we follow the ripening, strengthening, ennobling development of a genuine man, one who suffers and sins, but who also loves and endures, is staunch and true, and who, purified by the dis-

cipline of suffering, attains at last the summit of usefulness and happiness. This man is a knight, a man of the world, as it was conceived of by the author's generation, sharing in the feelings and sentiments common to his class; his knightly struggles and ventures have an interest for their narrator independent of any symbolic significance. In the *Quête*, on the other hand, the hero, a shadowy perfection at the outset, remains throughout a shadowy perfection, a bloodless and unreal creature, as fit when he first appears upon the scene as when he quits it to accomplish a quest, purposeless inasmuch as it only removes him from a world in which he has neither part nor share. The driving power of the romance is supplied by its fierce insistence upon the supreme excellence of celibacy and by the fervour of its sacramental symbolism. All else is indifferent or hateful to the author.

These differences in tone and feeling, not to be fully appreciated save by those who read the original text, would alone suffice to negative the hypothesis that the two sets of romances are the dissevered halves of a homogeneous whole, or variant versions of a common original theme. The distinction between them is far more deeply seated.

The second class of Grail romances gives, it has been seen, a Quest of the Holy Vessel differing markedly in part from that in the first class.

Now in two versions (*Didot Perceval* and *P. le Gallois*) belonging to this class the hero is Perceval, as in the first class, and in the *Quête*, Perceval is only second to the main hero. Again, one, the *Didot Perceval*, reproduces many of the adventures of the *Conte del Graal*, whilst the *Quête* also has the central adventures at the Fisher King's castle, though greatly altered and attached to a secondary personage, Lancelot. The inference is unmistakable; the Quest portions of the second class of Grail romances are in part based upon and derived from a Quest story similar to that found in the *Conte del Graal* and allied versions. To understand the real significance of the Quest incidents we must address ourselves firstly and chiefly to the romances of the first class. How does it stand with the other portion of the legend, the Early History of the Grail? The later portions of the *Conte del Graal* contain, we saw, fragments of an Early History substantially the same as that found in *Grand St. Graal* and *Quête*. Wolfram's *Parzival*, on the other hand, contains an Early History which is absolutely and entirely different. Remembering that those portions of the *Conte del Graal* which do yield this Early History are demonstrably the latest in date of that vast compilation, noting that they bear the traces of being obvious and at times inconsistent interpolations, the further inference is, if not certain, at least highly probable, that the Early History of

the *Conte del Graal* is based upon and derived from one akin to that found in the *Grand St. Graal and the Quête.* In other words, each section of the legend has borrowed from the other features and incidents inconsistent with its real essence. The fact that Crestien's continuators had to turn for information to works animated by such a different spirit justifies the surmise that they found nothing of a similar nature in his source, and that, as in the intervening lapse of time a special Christian account of the Grail had become the popular one, they felt constrained to clumsily substitute this dominant version for that of Crestien's source.

If what may be called the Joseph of Arimathea Early History be considered closely, it will be seen that in both its two main forms it is essentially a legend of the Conversion of Britain. Both forms start with Joseph, but at a later stage go widely asunder. In Borron it is kinsmen of Joseph, Brons, or Alain, or Petrus, who are the leaders of the evangelising emigration, it is to them that the Holy Vessel is confided. In the *Grand St. Graal-Quête* version Joseph's son, Josephes, is the leading spirit, and the fortunes of the Grail are bound up with those of Joseph's direct descendants or with the converted heathens Mordrains and Nasciens and their kin. This second is the popular version, the one which affected the later stages of the *Conte del Graal.* The fact that what may be called the

Vulgate Early History (whether in its Brons or Josephes form) is in reality a Conversion of Britain legend, is important when we recollect that the personages of the *Conte del Graal* and allied versions (the oldest form of the Quest) are British, and that the scene of the story is Britain, as also that the Wolfram Early History is asserted to be derived from a chronicle of the Angevin princes, the lords of Britain throughout the formative period of the Grail cycle. The romances of this cycle belong, by their origin, their purport, and their content, to England and not to France, a fact obscured for us by their being written almost entirely in French, and to a large extent by French writers, and only intelligible when we recall that throughout the twelfth century French was almost as much the language of what is now England as of what is now France, and that throughout a large part of the century the *Matière de Bretagne* was the fashionable and influential romance for all that was cultured in Western Christendom. It also, I think, puts out of court all attempts to derive this great body of romance from the numerous Holy Vessels found on the Continent since the First Crusade, and of which the *Sacro Catino* of Genoa was the most famous. The legends connected with them have none of them any connection with Britain.

But if the Early History of the Grail be thus a conversion of Britain legend, whence does it

derive its personages and incidents? The answer to this question decisively confirms the contention that the Grail romances are of insular and not of Continental origin. The account of Joseph, of his relation to Christ, his captivity, &c., is derived, in addition to the Gospel narrative, from a group of apocryphal writings, of which the *Evangelium Nicodemi* is the central and dominant one. Now it has been shown that, owing to circumstances of which we know nothing, this group of apocrypha was familiar to, and influential with, English writers in the eighth to eleventh centuries, at a time when no trace of it can be found in the other literatures of Western Christendom. Of course, these apocryphal writings are entirely silent about Joseph's conversion of Britain. But we do find an elaborate twelfth century account of the evangelisation of Britain by Joseph in a series of documents connected with, and undoubtedly originating from, the famous West British abbey of Glastonbury. Ignored as it is by Geoffrey of Monmouth, that insatiable romance-monger, the legend can hardly be older than the second third of the century. Whether it is as old; whether, in particular it is mentioned in the genuine writings of Geoffrey's contemporary, William of Malmesbury; whether it be not a reflection of the Grail romances, these are questions still debated by scholars. As the details are different from

anything in the romances, as in its earlier and simpler form there is no mention of the Holy Vessel, it is hard to see how the Glastonbury legend can be regarded as an outcome of the Grail romances. The balance of probability strongly inclines to the view that divers and independent legends of Joseph's conversion of Britain originated in twelfth century England, and that their origin and popularity was in some way connected with the early and wide spread in England of the apocryphal texts which had Joseph as their hero.

Glastonbury was not only a centre of ecclesiastical legend *ad majorem gloriam Britanniæ*, but also of the long and persistent efforts of the Angevin lord of England to utilise the Arthur legend for his own purpose in winning over his Celtic feudatories. Here in 1191 was found the tomb of Arthur and Guinevere, a discovery intended to give the *coup de grâce* to the hopes of Arthur's return and victorious championship of a Cymric revolt. Glastonbury also became associated in the twelfth century with Avalon, the old Celtic over-sea paradise; in what manner and at how early a date this association originated are still matters of dispute. It has been suggested that it arose precisely through the Grail romances; but when it is recollected how casual is the allusion in Borron's poem to the vales of Avalon, the goal of the Grail company's wanderings, the suggestion

lacks all probability. There is yet another remote and indirect connection between Glastonbury and the traditional account of the Grail legend. A persistent tradition, reaching back to the early thirteenth century, has ascribed the authorship of many of the Arthurian prose romances to Walter Map, the trusted counsellor of Henry II., the Angevin Lord of England whose efforts to utilise the Arthurian romances for his own objects have been mentioned. This traditional ascription is especially definite as regards the Lancelot cycle, in which the secondary versions of the Quest, those which make Galahad, son of Lancelot, its hero, must be reckoned. The final words of the *Quête del St. Graal*, asserting that "Walter Map made the book for the love of his lord, King Henry, who had the story translated from Latin into French," have already been quoted. All these facts, at least, hint at determined attempts made during the second half of the twelfth century to claim for the Church in Britain an origin well-nigh as illustrious as that of any Church, and for the land of Britain a special sanctity as the abiding place of the holiest of Christian relics; these attempts are inextricably bound up with the Arthur legend, and are in part traditionally associated with the trusted adviser of a king who, as we know, sought to utilise that legend for his own ends. They originate directly, or are associated indirectly, with a famous

sanctuary of British Christianity, one which has also other associations, seemingly of a more archaic, non-Christian character.

To realise the fact that both divisions of the Grail legend have their source in twelfth century England raises afresh the question whether they are really parts of one harmonious whole, parts equal in age and import? Assume for one moment that they are, and let us endeavour to realise what was the intention of the legend-writer, and in what way he proposed to carry out that intention. He sought, it is evident, to glorify his own country, a land blessed, above all others, by the presence of Christ's faithful disciples and of the sacred relics of the Passion. The holiness of these relics, the *raison d'être* of the whole legend, must, we would expect, be insisted upon from the first. What, then, *could* be his object in devising an account of what happened to the relics after they had safely reached Britain? To explain why they were no longer found there? To describe how the Grail-keepers fell from their high estate, and were ultimately restored thereto? Such an object would be intelligible, nay more, would be the only one which, so far as we can see, could have occurred to a writer who planned the whole legend with deliberate foresight. Can it be pretended that it is carried out in the Quest portion of the legend? True, the *Quête del St. Graal* does assert the

unworthiness of Britain to be the home of the Grail, but casually and without any attempt at explanation. True, the *Parzival* does give an explanation, the only one in the entire cycle which appeals to us as in any sense adequate, of the Grail-keeper's suffering. But would one legend-writer have set in motion Christ and Joseph and another have brought down the Grail from Heaven merely to point the moral of Anfortas' unlawful love? And if we could believe that such was his purpose, how are we to account for the fact that every other version (even the most ascetic in spirit) has utterly departed from it? Must we not rather recognise that the suffering of the Grail-keeper, so far from being an inherent element of a Conversion of Britain legend is rather in tacit disaccord with the essential spirit of such a legend and its purpose of exalting Britain as the land favoured by the Holy Vessel and its guardians?

Assume, on the other hand, that the Quest, as we have it in its oldest forms—the story of a hero seeking, by means of certain talismans, to restore a kinsman to health and prosperity, or to avenge an injury done him—became inextricably attached to a Christian legend with which originally it had nothing to do. Does not such an assumption provide a more plausible explanation of all the facts? Would not the attempt to interpret in a specifically Christian sense objects and incidents which in

themselves have nothing Christian, inevitably be carried in a half-hearted and inconsistent way at the best? Would not the nature and intensity of the Christian transformation process vary according to the nature and zeal of the individual writer? Would not such portions as lent themselves less readily to the sanctity of association with Christ be treated with little ceremony, and reshaped at the narrator's fancy? Could we expect any strong regard for the original incidents from writers to whom they were only of value after they had received a Christian gloss, or much feeling for the pertinency of that gloss, provided its Christian character were sufficiently decided? Arguments of this kind cannot be dismissed as of an *a priori* nature; they are based on the ordinary working of the human mind. Every form of imaginative narrative, however fantastic, however detached from reality, has its own logic, to which it inevitably conforms so long as it develops naturally. It is because there is logical disaccord between the various sections of the Grail legends, as we have them, that we are justified in asserting they can never have formed parts of one harmonious whole. The logical inconsistency is even more flagrant if, turning from the legend as a whole, the nature and attributes of the Holy Vessel itself be considered. In the later stages of the cycle it is, as we have seen, an object of the utmost sanctity; by its origin,

its properties, its effect upon its devotees, it appertains to what is holiest in Christianity, and yet it retains to the very end attributes which are purely material, and which could not have belonged to it, had it been from the outset the Sacramental Vessel and nothing else. Even the most definitely and fervently spiritual of the romances, the *Parzival* and the *Quête*, dwell strongly upon its food-producing qualities.

Before proceeding to examine the older versions of the Quest on the assumption of its original non-Christian character, certain aspects of the specific Christian portion of the developed legend claim attention. As we saw, this has its sources in apocryphal far more than in canonical Scripture; as we have assumed, it is superimposed upon a non-Christian basis. Little wonder, then, if we note a disconcerting, unorthodox aspect to be found nowhere else, to my knowledge, in the vast mass of mediæval legend of a distinctively Christian character. After making every allowance, however, for these two factors they fail, I hold, to account fully for the effect produced, an effect only to be realised by reading the romances as a whole. Apocryphal legend is often puerile, often tainted by a questionable mysticism derived from Gnostic sources; the adaptation by unskilful hands of non-Christian incidents to a Christian scheme of interpretation must needs yield occasional results of an

unorthodox character. But the sense in which the Grail romances are unorthodox, or rather anti-orthodox, is far more deep-seated and thorough. They not only claim for the Church of Britain an origin more illustrious than any to which it had pretended before the twelfth century, one which, if seriously maintained, would have been most unwelcome to the chief ecclesiastical authority of Christendom, they also set up a kind of uncanonical church with sacraments, unexceptionable it may be from the purely dogmatic standpoint, but open otherwise to the most serious objections. What may be called the Grail Church has in either form of the Early History an origin only less sacred than that of the official Church of Christendom—nay, in the Sacramental Vessel form (*Borron, Grand St. Graal-Quête*) it excels that Church as possessing the most sacred relics of the faith. The author of the *Grand St. Graal* is fully conscious of this when he tacitly claims his romance, the work of Christ Himself, as superior to Gospel.

In endeavouring to account for the remarkable claims put forward for the Grail Church and its Scriptures two points may be noted. In the *Parzival* form of the Early History the Grail Church is certainly reminiscent of, and modelled upon, the organisation of the Knights Templar. In the *Grand St. Graal* the two most prominent personages, after Josephes, are the converted heathen

warriors Mordrains and Nasciens. Mordrains fills to some extent in the *Quête* the same *rôle* as Anfortas in the Parzival; Nasciens is the direct ancestor of the successful Grail quester. Now both are, without doubt, the outcome of crusading conditions, of the early stage of that great conflict between West and East, between Christendom and the Moslem world, which called the Knights Templar into existence. We know what, at a later date, was the attitude of the Church to the Temple, and how the latter fell, crushed by the terrible accusations of impiety and alliance with the Powers of Darkness brought against it. Is it too rash a conjecture that the Grail romances reveal, in part, early attempts to claim for the knightly priesthood a position and sanction equal, if not superior, to those of the regular priesthood? If only a conjecture, it is at least better founded than the endeavours of earlier scholars to ascribe the essential heterodoxy of the Grail romances to the separatist tendencies of the British Church. May we not further recall the fact that the greatest of the Angevin kings, the politician who so persistently endeavoured to utilise the Arthurian legend for his own purposes, the patron of Walter Map, the traditional inspirer of the Lancelot Grail romances, was the opponent of Becket, and waged the bitterest struggle of his strenuous life against what, to use modern terminology, may be styled Ultramontanism?

That portion of the Grail romances which we have seen reason to regard as originally non-Christian now claims an examination. And here we must bear in mind the antecedent probability that, as well as the Christian portion, it has been modified by association with alien conceptions and incidents. In no instance, not even in the case of the *Peredur* or *Sir Percyvelle*, can we be sure that features and incidents have not been distorted in order to fit them into a Christian framework. Allowing for this possibility, and considering the Quest versions as a whole, we detect two main themes in the complicated mass of adventure of which they are formed. Certain versions, as we saw, are vengeance stories pure and simple, *Sir Percyvelle*, for instance, and Manessier's conclusion to Crestien's poem; in the *Peredur* the vengeance conception predominates, but we note other and inconsistent elements. Two of the mysterious talismans should, it would seem, be referred to this, the vengeance theme—the bleeding lance (as a rule the weapon with which the hero's injured kinsman has been slain or wounded), and the broken sword (as a rule the weapon with which the injury is to be avenged). In such a story there would seem to be no room for the Grail, the food-producing vessel. But we have more than one version of Perceval's visit to the castle of the Talismans, and, as we saw, his comrade Gawain likewise essays and partly

achieves the venture. As might be expected, the Gawain version is more primitive in tone, less affected by Christian symbolism than that in which Perceval figures. In one form (found in a German poem, *Diu Crone*, by Heinrich v. d. Türlin, which reproduces a lost French original), the inmates of the castle are in a Death in Life trance from which the hero's visit releases them; in another the partial achievement of the venture causes the heretofore desert land to bloom and blossom afresh. To this theme, the release from enchantment or unspelling quest as we may call it, the mysterious vessel of increase and plenty (the Grail) and the question are, it would seem, referable. The Grail here plays a twofold part; its inexhaustible food-producing qualities may be the means whereby the life of the lord of the castle is prolonged until the advent of his successor releases him from his vigil, or again, it may be regarded as a fertility talisman from which the land is debarred until the destined hero appears. In either case the result is to put the hero, directly or indirectly, in possession of a fertile land, and the question is the chief means by which the result is attained.

Thus at the back of our present Grail Quest stories lie, as we may conjecture, simple tales of which Perceval and Gawain (in Welsh, Peredur and Gwalchmai), were the heroes. In one the hero avenged the slaying of his father and the

harm done to his uncle (the prototype of *Sir Percyvelle*); in another, by means of lance and sword he avenged the wrong done to uncle and cousin (prototype of the *Peredur*); another told how, penetrating to a magic castle within a waste and desert realm, he became master of a wonder-working talisman of fertility, and restored plenty to the land; in another, by aid of the same talisman he either restored a kinsman to health or released him from supernaturally prolonged life, and took his place.

At an early stage of their development these stories, crystallising as they did round the same hero, would have a tendency to influence each other, to become confused. From out the mass of varying, but only slightly varying narratives, a few main forms would emerge, differentiated by greater or less insistence upon the vengeance or the unspelling theme, but betraying, as a rule, the mixture of both. The unspelling conception, as the more definitely mythic of the two, would suffer most change; the more recondite significance of the old mythic talisman of increase and plenty would tend to disappear; its material food-producing properties would subsist, and this characteristic, as a matter of fact, is found in every version in which the Grail appears, in Crestien as in Wolfram, in the *Quête* as in *Perceval le Gallois*. The recondite significance of the machinery (the question) by

which the talisman is transferred to the hero's possession might likewise be expected to be lost, and, as a matter of fact, no version offers a satisfactory explanation, nor has any modern interpreter offered one that has won general acceptance. Thanks to the conservatism of story-tellers, it retained its place, but it became unintelligible. What relates to the vengeance conception, on the other hand, was retained in comparatively unchanged form; mythic it might be in origin and essence, yet its simply human character commended it as much to men of the twelfth century as to those of an earlier age. In the *Peredur* and in Manessier it has suffered little from contamination, but in Crestien and the remainder of the *Conte del Graal* it is subordinated to the unspelling quest, the Grail and question.

In the older Grail quests, though none is wholly free from the Christian element, yet that is, save in the *Parzival*, secondary; the knightly adventurous element predominates. It is otherwise in the later Grail quests (*Quête*, *Perceval le Gallois*). Here the Christian element dominates. The original sequence of incidents is boldly disregarded or radically modified; the original achiever of the quest, Perceval, is dispossessed by the new favourite in the Arthurian world, Lancelot, represented by his son Galahad. Naturally, the vengeance conception and the incidents by which it is embodied

disappear; naturally, all that relates to the fertility talisman itself (now fully identified with the sacramental vessel) is magnified; naturally, the unintelligible question is almost entirely dropped. But still, though caught up to very heaven, though filled with the essence of divinity, still the Grail retains the material characteristics of an increase and plenty talisman.

In assuming the existence of an original mass of non-Christian narratives from which the existing romances have derived a considerable portion of their subject matter, we rely, though not solely, upon the existence of the *Peredur* and the *Sir Percyvelle*. If these do not represent a stage in the evolution of the Grail Quest romances older than and independent of the *Conte del Graal*, they must needs be derived from that work. How in that case account for the loss of the fertility talisman in the one tale (*Peredur*) and of everything relating to the unspelling quest in the other? Given common sense and absence of prejudice, the question answers itself. But even if these two versions had disappeared the assumption I have made would be legitimate. The Grail Quest romances are, in their extant form, inextricably bound up with the Arthur legend as a whole, and the Arthur legend rests for a very large part upon a basis of Celtic folk and hero tales, representatives of which may still be found in the older

heroic romances of both branches of the Celtic race, the Irish and the Welsh. Of these, the Irish is by far the older and richer, and the oldest portion of the Welsh is so closely connected with Irish legend as to give colour to the hypothesis that it is really due to an Irish population settled in Wales in prehistoric times, and gradually driven out or subjugated by the incoming Welshmen. It is in this old heroic and mythic romance that the closest parallels are found to numerous incidents and sequences of incidents frequently met with in the French Arthurian stories of the twelfth century, and, what is even more significant than parallelism of incident, there is parallelism of tone, of atmosphere, of the modes of conceiving and presenting the story as a whole. In no section of Arthurian romances are the minor parallelisms of incident with the older Celtic legends more frequent than in the Grail Quest stories, or is the parallelism of essential conception more intimate and striking.

Thus, old Celtic romance (Irish or Welsh) is largely concerned with a race of supernatural beings, the gods of the earliest Celtic Pantheon, and the mysterious wonderland in which they dwell. In Ireland they have retained a semi-divine aspect and attributes, they can shift shape at will, they are undying; in Wales they have come down to the level of powerful magicians. This race is in

possession of marvellous talismans, the chief of which is a symbol of fertility and increase in the shape of a cauldron which yields an inexhaustible supply of food to the taste of each partaker. In Irish myth this talisman, the cauldron of the Dagda—"a company used not ever to go away from it unsatisfied,"—is definitely associated with three other talismans, "the sword of Lug the Long-Handed" (the Irish sun-god), "the spear Lug used in battle," and the Lia Fail, or Stone of Destiny (now in the Coronation seat at Westminster Abbey) as the four precious objects which the god race brought with them when they first came to Ireland. A cauldron similar to that of the Dagda (the Irish Zeus) is also part of the gear of Manannan mac Lir (the Irish sea-god), and of Angus, son of the Dagda, the most potent magician of the immortal race. The dwelling places of these mysterious and powerful beings may, like the Grail Castle, be reached by mortals, but only chancewise and if the inmates are willing; like the Grail Castle they suddenly disappear from the ken of the mortal visitor, who finds himself lying on the bare hillside with no trace of the splendours he has witnessed. As in the Grail Castle, the visitor is feasted royally.

In Welsh romance the same magic cauldron appears. In one case it belongs to Bran, son of Llyr (a Welsh representative of the Irish god race), and here its healing and life-restoring powers are

dwelt upon. Such may well have been its attributes in some of those early tales underlying the existing Grail Quest which insisted rather upon the healing of the hero's kinsman than upon the restoration of his land to fertility. Elsewhere it is associated with other talismans of a decidedly mythical character, and is, like the Grail, celebrated alike for its material and its spiritual properties—it is a producer of food, but also of inspiration and ecstasy.

The conception that the welfare of a land may be so bound up with that of its ruler that his evil conduct, or simply his misfortune, may entail famine or desolation, and conversely that his merit or luck may ensure prosperity, is familiar in Irish heroic legend. So also is the conception that the supernatural powers may curse a land with sterility and restore it again to fertility. In Welsh legend magic is the agent, and the Welsh mythic romance, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, tells of Pryderi, and how his land was subjected by an enemy to an illusion, "where they were wont to see cattle and herds, and dwellings, they saw nothing now, neither house nor beast, nor smoke, nor fire, nor man, nor dwelling, but the houses of the Court empty and desolate, without either man or beast within them." From this illusion, as well as from imprisonment in a magic castle which vanishes as soon as he penetrates

within it, Pryderi and his land are delivered by Manawyddan, son of Llyr (the Welsh counterpart of the Irish sea-god).

In a similar way the conception of a hero urged to the accomplishment of his task by a kinsman lying under enchantment until it is accomplished is also familiar in early Irish romance. It is indeed a conception of world-wide spread, but the Celtic presentment has distinguishing features. A lucky accident has preserved the fragment of an Irish folk story dating back to the tenth century at the latest, in which the bespelled kinsman appears in a hideous guise described in terms which strikingly recall the hideous damsel of the *Conte del Graal* (the hero's cousin, as we learn from the *Peredur*).

It goes without saying that an archaic state of society such as that of mediæval Ireland and Wales laid the utmost stress upon the duty of blood vengeance, and that stories with this theme are common. A famous Irish example is the tale entitled "The Fate of the Children of Turenn," which recounts the tasks imposed by Lug the Long-Handed (the Irish sun-god) upon the slayers of his father. Among these tasks was the winning of a poisonous irresistible spear.

Reference to these early Celtic tales supplies the only hint of an explanation which has yet been suggested of the mysterious question. Their heroes are commonly subject to mysterious spells con-

straining them to do certain actions, or forbidding them from others, under penalty of disaster or death if they infringe the spell. With the Irish story-teller the *geis*, as the spell is called, plays much the same part as Nemesis in Greek myth; it is the controlling, over-mastering power. It may be conjectured that an injunction of this kind was laid upon the questing hero in one of the tales out of which the romances have grown; that he was constrained to use certain formalities in the accomplishment of his task, or had imposed upon him certain disabilities, and that this feature, misunderstood as it inevitably would be by twelfth century story-tellers, is reflected in the question incident as we have it.

This series of parallels could be greatly extended if, passing from the salient incidents of the Grail Quest, to which alone I have here been able to call attention, the secondary traits and episodes of the romances were made the subject of comparison. As might be expected, these have been less affected by intruding Christian symbolism, and in consequence they betray their close affinity to the archaic Irish and Welsh tales in a most marked manner. But enough has been instanced, I trust, to demonstrate that the texture, the colouring, the essential conception of the older Grail Quest stories, can be paralleled from early Celtic mythic romance, and, I may add, from no other contemporary

European literature; if the reference to Celtic romance be discarded, but one alternative remains, namely, that the French story-tellers of the twelfth century made up this fantastic Arthurian realm of eerie glamour out of their own heads.

We may thus feel assured that the talismans themselves, that the quest for them, and the use to which they were put, existed in stories older than and unaffected by Christianity. We note the significant fact that two of the talismans, vessel of plenty and death-dealing spear, are part of the gear of the early Celtic gods, gods who also figure as engaged in laying under sterilising spells the realms of their opponents, whether of their own divine race or belonging to that of men. In so far as these objects could, before their Christian transformation, be charged with mysterious and awe-inspiring potency, in so far as these tales of magic strife could be invested with traditional sanctity, this was the case. It was no simple peasant's tale that came ultimately into the hands of the Christian story-teller, but one elaborated by the bardic class, the jealous guardians, alike in Ireland and in Wales, of the racial mythic and heroic traditions.

We have now briefly surveyed the *corpus* of Grail romances and have found it to consist of Celtic pre-Christian mythic tales (involving ultimately the fates and struggles of gods and demi-

gods), fused with tales which had as their object the glorification of Britain in their account of the illustrious origin and pre-eminent privileges of the Christian Church in these islands. Before this fusion took place the Celtic tales, originally mythic, had been largely heroicised; hero had supplanted demi-god. Yet they retained enough of the primitive intent and content to lend themselves to the creative impulse of the new and higher mythology. The Pagan vessel of increase, plenty and ecstasy was not so far emptied of its pristine significance, but that it could be reshaped as the holiest relic of Christendom, or be identified, by Robert de Borron, with the body of the dead and risen Lord; the Achiever of the Quest was not so oblivious of his primitive mythic status as to be unfitted for the approximation, vaguely suggested by Wolfram and the *Quête*, of his career to that of the Saviour.

But if, thus broadly surveyed, the general development of the stories clustering round the precious talisman may be summed up as the gradual transformation of old Celtic mythic tales into a legend charged with Christian symbolism and mysticism, many stages in this process remain obscure. What suggested the fusion of stories of a hero questing after talismans with those of the evangelisers of Britain? Were these latter, as has been suggested, possessors of the holy vessel

before that fusion took place? If so, what was the form which the conversion legend had assumed, and how was it affected by, and how did it affect the quest story after the twain had been welded into one?

The conversion legend started, it is urged, with Joseph. The forty years' solitary captivity is an essential feature of the Joseph legend. The question naturally arose—how was he kept in life? by a wonderful food-producing vessel of the kind familiar in the folklore of nearly every race, a vessel naturally and progressively identified with the receptacle of Christ's blood, with the dish, and then with the cup of the Last Supper. To guard such a precious relic and to exhibit alike the mysteries of the Trinity and the Sacrament, the three Grail-keepers were imagined: Joseph, Brons, the grandson of Brons; the three tables were instituted: that of the Last Supper with its place left empty by Judas' betrayal; Joseph's table, on which figures the Grail; Arthur's Table Round, with its empty seat to be filled only by the last of the Grail-keepers.

Such a legend would naturally tend to centre round the precious vessel, to exalt it more and more. When a lucky chance suggested the identification of the last Grail-keeper, the filler of the empty seat, the final accomplisher of the dramatic action started centuries before in Palestine, with

the young hero who quested forth in search, he, too, of a precious vessel, and thereby delivered his kinsmen and released their land from enchantment, the two vessels (in their ultimate origin the same) were also fully identified, with the result of strengthening such non-Christian characteristics as still survived in the Christianised vessel of the conversion legend. Thence onwards, the legend developed as each individual writer was attracted by the religious or by the knightly adventurous element, and in accordance with his capacity to shape these different elements so as to set forth his conception.

Ingenious as this hypothesis is, it leaves out of account *why* the conversion legend was associated with personages of the Arthurian cycle. Rather, I think, must the precious vessel be regarded as foreign to the Joseph conversion legend until after this association had taken place. What, then, gave rise to it? I can only point out that Borron's form of the conversion legend betrays not alone Celtic affinities (that inevitably followed once the evangelisers set foot in Celtic Britain), but specific Arthurian affinities in the mention of Avalon as the goal of the Grail host, a mention which Borron himself did not understand, so that even if the Arthurian machinery of the *Merlin*—the establishment of the Round Table in imitation of that of the Grail table—be ascribed to Borron,

yet the fusion of conversion and Arthur legends must have begun before his time. Avalon is the Welsh form of the old Celtic Elysium, of which vivid and detailed descriptions have survived in Irish literature; an Elysium closely allied to the dwelling-places of the Celtic god-race, the owners of the inexhaustible food cauldron of the Dagda, of the Spear and Sword of Lug, the race represented in Wales by the Children of Llyr and Don. Second only in importance to Joseph in Borron's poem are his kinsmen, Brons and Alain, who bear distinctively Celtic names. Brons recalls the Welsh Bran, son of Llyr, possessor, in the Welsh tale of Branwen, of a cauldron of healing and rejuvenation, himself transported after his death on earth to an Elysium, where he continued a mystic life; when slain in battle, his comrades, at his bidding, cut off his head, and with it retire to Gwales in Penvro, where they pass fourscore years, "unconscious of having spent a time more joyous and mirthful . . . it was not more irksome to them having the head with them than if Blessed Bran had been with them himself." At the end of the fourscore years infringing an injunction which Bran had laid upon them, and becoming aware of the flight of time and of all their past woe, they bury their lord's head near London, and so long as it remained concealed the isle of Britain was free from invasion. At a date which is uncertain, but of which, at least,

no definite trace exists prior to the late thirteenth century, Bran was made the hero in Wales of a conversion legend, which may embody old tradition but may, on the other hand, be a reflex of the Grail romances, though, if so, it is the only trace in Welsh of any knowledge of Borron's version. In support of its embodying old tradition is the fact that, as just cited, in the tale of Branwen, the redaction of which goes back to the eleventh century, Bran has the epithet Blessed. This originally Pagan epithet, doubtless applied to him as possessor of the rejuvenation cauldron, may have been the starting-point of a legend ascribing to him a share in the introduction of Christianity into Britain.

Taking all these indications into existence, it seems most likely that Borron, or rather the sources he followed, became acquainted with a *Bran* conversion legend, and fused it with the better-known *Joseph* one. In this way Bran's precious vessel would become associated with Joseph. True we only know of it from the Welsh tale of Branwen as a rejuvenation and healing talisman, but this conception is closely allied to that of a talisman of increase and plenty, and, as a matter of fact, it is found also in the Grail romances, though less insisted upon than the other. Moreover, we only know of one aspect of Bran's cauldron from our Welsh tale, because only one

form of its power is there brought into play; the merest fragment of Welsh mythic romance has come down to us, and it is folly to argue as if what we do not find in that fragment cannot have existed.

The fusion of the two conversion legends would undoubtedly be facilitated by the fact of the localisation of the Joseph legend at Glastonbury This ancient seat of British Christianity was at some unknown date identified with Avalon; the texts which have preserved this identification are comparatively late, and the identification has been ascribed to the influence of the romances. Undoubtedly the story as we have it bears traces of the efforts made during Henry the Second's reign to utilise the Celtic legends for political purposes. But the first germ of the conception that a venerable sanctuary of the Christian faith in Britain had succeeded, as it were, to the attributes of the wonderland of the Celtic gods must be far older than Henry's reign—older, indeed, than the twelfth century.

The fusion of a Brons and a Joseph conversion legend (a fusion, be it noted, which could take place in Britain and in Britain alone) would not only permit the introduction of the precious vessel into the latter, it would almost inevitably bring it into contact with the Arthur cycle. The latter is largely made up of heroicised versions of themes

and incidents which had figured at an earlier date in mythic romance, and it had drawn many of the personages of the older mythic world within its grasp. In this way the connection between the hero legend of Arthur, defender of Britain against heathen invaders, and the religious legend of the evangelisers of Britain would be established naturally, and so as to allow of, nay, to invite, further development.

Assuming, then, that prior to Crestien's time, the two portions of the legend had been welded into a more or less compact whole, and that the Quest talismans had thereby acquired Christian attributes and properties, the question arises how far the process of fusion had been carried, and in what way it was affected by Crestien's work. Did the French poet find in his source any such coherent account of the early history of the Grail and lance as is yielded either by Robert de Borron, or by the rival version of the *Grand St. Graal-Quête*? If Crestien's continuators got their information from his source, that source must likewise have been the fountain-head of the *Grand St. Graal-Quête*. Crestien would in that case seem to have deliberately left in abeyance the definite religious element of his source, and to have devoted himself to the elaboration of the knightly adventurous portion. For, even if at his hero's second visit to the Grail Castle he had given the information we

now find in his continuators, the religious aspect of his work would still be pale and slight in comparison with the adventurous. But whether the continuators of Crestien did resort to the latter's source is extremely doubtful in view of the marked divergence in the conduct of the story between both Manessier and Gerbert, and the poet whose work they were completing. Nor can the question be decided without reference to Wolfram's source, the lost French poem of Guiot. Two hypotheses respecting this are possible. It may have been, as is now more commonly assumed, composed within a few years after Crestien's death with a view to giving a complete version of the story he had left incomplete. If so, and if Crestien's source had contained either form of the Early History in as an advanced stage of development as in Robert de Borron, or to *Grand St. Graal*, would, or could Guiot have discarded it? He could have made it subservient to the greater glory of the Angevin princes as easily as the version which he offers; he could have adapted it as readily to the moral and spiritual conceptions which animate his work. If, on the other hand, Guiot's poem is older than that of Crestien, it is probably nearer to the common source of both in its lesser insistence upon the Christian machinery derived from the Conversion legend, although, thanks to the poet's personality, it is animated

by a far deeper and more spiritual Christian feeling.

Thus, although both Crestien's and Guiot's accounts of the Grail seem to presuppose its previous identification not only with the receptacle of Christ's blood, but also with the sacramental cup (as evidenced in Guiot's case by the fact that the power of the Grail is renewed by a Host), it is unlikely that such a full and coherent form of the Early History as we find in the later romances was accessible to them. It may rather be conjectured that the stress they laid upon the knightly adventurous element in the story led other writers to elaborate the Early History by way of accentuating the religious element.

The real achievement of Crestien and Guiot, the decisive influence they exerted upon the evolution of the cycle, lay in their conception and presentment of the Quest. Substantially the non-Christian framework and texture, with all their fascinating charm and variety, are retained, but the story is lifted on to a loftier moral and intellectual plane, and thereby enabled to hold its own against the competition of the purely Christian portion of the legend. This intellectualising, spiritualising process is far more developed in Guiot than in Crestien, and it is a matter for profound regret that, as ingeniously surmised by Dr. Wechssler, the Angevin (*i.e.* English) tendencies of Guiot's poem brought it into disfavour

in France as soon as the French royal house had got the better of its formidable rivals. Had it been otherwise, had Henry II. been succeeded by a son wise and able as himself, and England thereby secured the hegemony of the French-speaking world, Guiot, instead of Crestien, might have yielded the standard, the dominant version of the Quest. As it is, we must at least be thankful that his work fell into the hands of a man as well fitted as was Wolfram to appreciate its moral and spiritual aims.

We can measure the service rendered by these two great poets to the story of the Grail Quest by comparing their work with the aimless and rambling jumble of disconnected adventures found in the continuations of Crestien.

The after development of the cycle, though presenting numberless problems of detail, is yet fairly clear in its main outline. Crestien and Guiot made the Grail Quest story fashionable as much by their skill in relating the marvellous feats and ventures of the hero as by the moral and spiritual aim of their work. One set of following writers simply worked such veins of the knightly adventurous mine as have been left unexploited by the two great poets; others elaborated the distinctively Christian portion, the Early History; others, again, fused the two, more or less maladroitly. But the normal development of the cycle was profoundly modified

by influences which were modifying the entire body of Arthurian romance. To understand the later versions of the Quest we must realise the nature of these influences.

In the earliest stages of the Arthurian cycle the pre-eminent hero is Gawain, who is also second only to Perceval as hero of the Quest story. Perceval's rank in the latter gave him a position in the Arthurian world, generally, inferior only to that of Gawain. At a later stage both were superseded by Lancelot, who became the acknowledged mirror and exemplar of chivalry. To attain this position Gawain had to be degraded, and a sure test of the age of any given Arthurian text is yielded by the view it presents of Gawain's character. Lancelot owed his pre-eminence to the fact that he became, as the Queen's lover, the exemplar of the ideal of courtly love. But this very ideal provoked what may be called a Puritan reaction among a certain section of romance-writers, who eagerly sought out whatever might yield matter for an opposing ideal of ascetic life. The Perceval Quest was thus rewritten by the author of *Perceval le Gallois* in a spirit of militant asceticism; the hero's virginity is insisted upon aggressively. But the progress of Lancelot towards the headship, after Arthur, of the Arthurian world kept pace with the increasing favour shown towards the Grail Quest as the most marvellous "branch"

of the whole Arthurian cycle. A time must naturally come when Arthur's mightiest hero could no longer be kept out of the chief venture of Arthur's Court. Yet when that time came the Puritan reaction had fixed a deep chasm between the two sets of tendency exhibited in the cycle—the knightly amorous and the spiritual ascetic. How could Lancelot, the Queen's lover, be permitted even to view, much less to become possessed of, the holy vessel into which by this time the full potency of sacramental mysticism had been poured? Yet how could he, pattern of knighthood, be excluded from its blessings? The dilemma was solved, the chasm was bridged by the creation of Lancelot's son Galahad, in whom was exemplified in a yet more uncompromising, yet more inhuman spirit the ideal of militant asceticism imperfectly set forth by the author of *Perceval le Gallois*. In this way arose and took shape the Galahad Quest of the *Grand St. Graal-Quête*. It is possible that the writers of these romances may have embodied some earlier features, possible that they may have built up their hero round the personality of some forgotten hero of the Arthurian cycle; but in his very essence, as in the major part of his adventures, Galahad is emphatically the latest comer in the world of Arthurian romance.

Only a word need be said about *Sir Percyvelle*

and the *Peredur*. The former reproduced, with hardly a trace of the prodigious development which had taken place, one of the pre-Christian component stories of the Grail Quest; the second, the Welsh tale, reproduced another pre-Christian component form accurately, as regards the essence of the story, but with a considerable amount of ornamental detail taken from Crestien and other French sources. As a rule, this extraneous matter remains simple ornament, but at times it obscures and distorts the march of the story.

Such, all too briefly sketched, has been the development of the Grail cycle from the time when legends relating the evangelisation of Britain were brought into contact with heroicised versions, belonging to the Arthur cycle, of older mythic tales. The composite legend thus formed, lived and flourished because it was composite, because it drew sustenance and spirit from the two worlds the fusion of which constitutes Modern Europe, the world of Christian classic culture, and the older barbaric world which that culture was to transform, but by which it was also to be itself transformed. The most diverse types of spiritual and artistic intelligence could thus find sustenance for their imaginings. The magic talisman of the Celtic gods, the Holiest Relic of Christian faith, gave to each "the food he

most desired." Its bounty is not exhausted though countless generations have fed from it. Within the last fifty years this marvellous legend has proved as fertile in the mind of genius, as it was eight hundred years ago, to set forth and typify the longings and ideals of humanity.

# NOTES

THE object of the present Series of Popular Studies is as much to assist those who are anxious to pursue a special line of study as to give an accurate summary of any particular subject to those who do not wish for more than a general knowledge of it. In the present instance the second intention is almost impossible to realise in view of the enormous mass and great complexity of the subject-matter. All the more, therefore, do I trust that I may be able to induce many of my readers to take up the study of the Grail cycle. There is only one way of setting about this, and that is to read the romances themselves Luckily, several of the most important are easily accessible to the English reader. The PEREDUR, the most archaic form of the Quest story, may be read in my edition of the *Mabinogion;* Wolfram's PARZIVAL, the finest example of the Quest story as transformed by Christian influence, in Miss Weston's translation (2 vols. 10*s.* 6*d.*); the PERCEVAL LE GALLOIS, the transitional bridge between the knightly hero of Crestien-Guiot and the ascetic hero of the later legend, in Dr. Evans' exquisite translation (*The High History of the Holy Grail*, 2 vols. 4*s.*); and the QUÊTE DU ST. GRAAL, the final outcome of Puritan asceticism, in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (best read in Dr. Sommer's faithful reprint of Caxton's text, 2 vols. 7*s.* 6*d.*, in which it occupies Books 13–18). When these four versions have been mastered, the main

lines of development will be clear, and attention can be given to the remaining works of the cycle. Of these, the GRAND ST. GRAAL and the DIDOT PERCEVAL are accessible in Hucher's *Le Saint-Graal ou le Joseph d'Arimathie*, 3 vols., 1875–78 (£1 10*s.*). A fifteenth-century metrical English adaptation of the GRAND ST. GRAAL has likewise been edited by Dr. Furnivall: *Seynt Graal; or, the Sank Ryal*, 2 vols., 1861–63 (printed for the Roxburghe Club), but this is only accessible to frequenters of large libraries; moreover, the reader who has a fair knowledge of modern French will, after a few days' work, find the thirteenth-century prose of the French original easier to understand than the fifteenth-century verse of the English adaptation. Borron's poem is printed in Furnivall's *Seynt Graal*.

SIR PERCYVELLE is accessible in Halliwell's edition: *The Thornton Romances*, 1884, printed for the Camden Society. Unfortunately the chief work of the cycle, the CONTE DEL GRAAL, is practically inaccessible, only 100 copies having been printed of the only edition, that of M. Potvin, 6 vols., Mons, 1866–71. Professor Baist is engaged upon a new edition. Readers who can consult one of the few copies extant in England, and who have a fair knowledge of modern French, will not find Crestien very difficult, less so than is Chaucer to the average well-educated Englishman.

As regards the literature of the subject, there are only two works to which the reader can be referred for full and accurate summaries of the romances: Birch-Hirschfeld, *Die Sage vom Gral*, 1877, and my own *Studies on the Legend of the Holy Grail*, 1888. This latter, the only work accessible to readers unacquainted with German, is now out of print. The only other work dealing with the cycle as a whole, Prof. R. Heinzel's *Die französischen Gralromane*, a monument of erudition and ingenuity, is useless to all but advanced students, the "senior wranglers" of the study. Dr. E. Wechssler has done

excellent work in determining the relation to each other of the existing prose romances, and in tracing their development (*Die verschiedenen Redaktionen der Graal-Lancelot Cyklus*,1895), and his *Sage v. heil. Gral*, 1898, which contains a useful bibliography, and many acute and valuable suggestions might be recommended if it did not present the author's hypothetical view of the development of the legend (a view entirely untenable in parts) in such a way as to lead the unknowing reader to imagine that it set forth the evidence of the texts.

Other works will be mentioned as occasion offers.

CRESTIEN'S DATE. (Page 6.)

This has been best fixed by Wechssler, *Sage v. h. G.*, par. 63.

WOLFRAM'S PARZIVAL. (Page 11.)

The most perplexing and obscure problems of the Grail literature are connected with this poem. In addition to Miss Weston's translation, the following should be consulted, in addition to the works cited, *Studies*, p. 261: Hagen, *Parzival-Studien*, 1892; Golther, *Lohengrin* (Rom. Forschungen, V. 1890); Lichtenstein, *Zur Parzivalfrage* (Paul u. Braune, Beitr. 1897); Hertz' admirable modern German adaptation of Wolfram's *Parzival*, 1898.

THE CONTINUATORS OF CRESTIEN. (Page 9.)

The following may be consulted: H. Waitz, *Die Fortsetzungen v. Crestien's P. le Gallois*, 1890.

The statements on the subject in my *Studies* must be supplemented and corrected from this work.

DATE OF GRAND ST. GRAAL. (Page 27.)

Up to 1898, the date of 1204, assumed to be that in which Helinandus finished his Chronicle, was accepted as

a *terminus ad quem* for the GRAND ST. GRAAL, or for its source. Dr. Evans, *High History*, ii. p. 293, has shown that Helinandus wrote about 1220.

PERCEVAL LE GALLOIS. (Page 34.)

This has been recently studied by Dr. Nitze, *The old French Grail Romance of Perlesvaus*. Baltimore, 1902.

THE JOSEPH LEGEND. (Page 41.)

The chief discussion of the Glastonbury legend is that of Prof. G. Baist, Zeitschrift für Rom. Philologie, xix.

Prof. Wülcker, *Das Evangelium Nicodemi in der abendländischen Literatur*, 1872, has shown the early knowledge of this apocryphal work in England.

GLASTONBURY AND AVALON. (Page 42.)

*Cf.* M. Ferd Lot: *Glastonbury et Avalon*, in Romania, vol. xxvii.

THE GRAIL KNIGHTS AND THE TEMPLARS. (Page 48.)

The special modification of the Grail Quest with a view of connecting it more closely with the Temple knighthood found in Guiot-Wolfram is undoubtedly bound up with a number of Oriental traits and features only met with in the Parzival. These lend colour to the hypothesis that Guiot had himself been in the East, and become acquainted with many Eastern legends, and also that he was in some way attached to the Temple order.

These Oriental traits in the Parzival have misled certain scholars into imagining an Eastern origin for the Grail legend. The last statement of this view is Prof. A. Wesselovsky's: Archiv f. Slav. Philologie, 1901.

*Cf.* Dr. P. Hagen's valuable *Der Gral*, 1900.

CELTIC ELEMENTS IN THE GRAIL LEGEND.
(Pages 55-59.)

In my *Studies* I chiefly dwelt upon the Irish analogies and parallels. Prof. Rhys in his *Arthurian Legend*, 1891, brought into prominence the Welsh parallels, notably the enchantment of Pryderi's land with the wasting of the realm of the Fisher King (Perceval's uncle).

THE BESPELLED AND AIDING KINSMAN. (Page 58.)

This instance, from *Cormac's Glossary*, an Irish compilation of the 10th–11th centuries, is cited and discussed by me, *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition*, 1890, vol. ii., p. 467.

THE QUESTION. (Page 58.)

My explanation of this as due to misunderstanding of an original *geis* (pronounced *gess*) is strengthened by the kinship between the Lohengrin (Swan Knight) and Grail story. For in Lohengrin the supernatural hero is under a *geis* not to reveal his name, and the infringement of this tabu ensures his withdrawal to his own land. Now the oldest known instance of the theme of a supernatural wife, or husband, who imposes injunctions the infringement of which is fatal, is found in Ireland, in the well-known story entitled *Noinden Ulad* (the Feebleness of the Ulstermen).

*Cf.* Miss Hull's *Cuchullin Saga*, p. 96.

(Pages 62, 63.)

The two paragraphs are a summary of Dr. Wechssler's argument, *Sage v. heil. Gral*, pp. 12–18. I agree with the argument, save when I express dissent from it.

GUIOT AND CRESTIEN. (Page 68.)

Miss Weston is the chief advocate of Guiot's priority. I think she is right.

LANCELOT. (Pages 71, 72.)

*Cf.* Miss Weston's *Legend of Sir Lancelot du Lac*, 1901, on which this paragraph is based.

(Page 74.)

I allude of course, to Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*.

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